

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: **A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
HEAD START PROGRAM INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL
SYSTEM**

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Head Start is a federally funded program that has been in existence since 1965. Recently there have been changes to the federal program as a part of reform efforts. The reform efforts include a competitive grant process and a strong desire for established organizations to become grantees in the hope of improving educational outcomes for young children from impoverished backgrounds.

The challenges of program and new initiative implementation in school systems have been studied for many years. Much has been written about implementing change in schools and school systems, using federal funds in particular, and the impact of those changes on existing school structures. More recent approaches to implementation of reforms have looked to implementation science as the model.

Dean Fixsen and his colleagues at the National Implementation Research Network have identified common elements in successful implementation that apply to any human service. The purpose of this study was to examine the technical and social factors of the

implementation process for the federally funded \$11 million Head Start grant in a school system. Fixsen's implementation framework and qualitative case study methodology were used.

The following question guided my case study:

To what extent does the implementation of the Head Start program in the school system reflect the Fixsen model and to what extent has it been influenced by each of the Fixsen drivers: organization, competency, and leadership?

The data for the study were obtained through a review of the original grant application and annual reapplication documents, analysis of a series of Health and Human Services program monitoring reviews, and interviews with Head Start teachers. The data were organized using the Fixsen implementation framework for comparison and analysis.

This school system's implementation followed the Fixsen model. There was evidence of all of the phases and drivers in its implementation. The successes the school system experienced can be attributed to the thoughtful consideration to components identified in the phases and drivers. The challenges the school system faced also can be directly linked to deficits or oversights with the drivers as well as inadequate time and attention to detail throughout the various phases.

A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A HEAD START PROGRAM
INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

by

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Dedication

For my father who believed I could do anything and for my husband Brad, who proved to me that I could. To my children, Shannon and Matt, and my sister Moriah, for being my steadfast cheerleaders, I am grateful. For Doreen, for tireless reading and rereading, I thank you.

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Section I: Introduction

Implementation of federally funded programs is complex, and sustainability of innovative or new programs has challenged school systems and policymakers for decades (Thomas & Brady, 2005). Head Start is a federally funded program that has been in existence since 1965. There have been recent changes to the federal program as a part of reform efforts. The reform efforts include a competitive grant process and a strong desire for established organizations such as school systems to become grantees in the hope of improving educational outcomes for young children from impoverished backgrounds. Currently, very few school systems in the mid-Atlantic state in which the school system under study is located are official grantees of Head Start although numerous school systems serve as delegate agencies; a delegate agency is identified on the Head Start website as “a local public or private not-profit or for-profit agency to which a Head Start or Early Head Start agency has delegated all or part of its responsibility for operation of a Head Start program” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2015, p. 93). In many delegate situations, classroom space for the program is provided within an elementary school but the program is operated through an agency other than a school system.

In 2012, the school system under study applied for and received the grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take over and operate the Head Start program for the system. In 2013, Head Start classrooms were launched in three of the system’s elementary schools. The staff charged with putting into practice the Head Start grant faced many of the challenges documented in previous literature. Through this study, I proposed to examine the implementation process, through the lens

of implementation science, as it was unfolding in the school system. This case study can inform the ongoing Head Start implementation as well as future program implementation. In the following sections I present an overview of the Head Start program, Head Start reforms and compliance challenges, information about the school system, its early childhood programs, the history of Head Start in the county, and a historical review of implementation challenges.

The Head Start Program

Head Start is a federally funded early childhood program with a long history. In January 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a War on Poverty, and based upon that declaration, with the support of respected educators and other professionals, a comprehensive child development program was established. The program was the brainchild of Sargent Shriver, a special assistant to President Johnson, who had been previously associated with early intervention programs. Shriver was also aware of the potential of early childhood programs to provide an important stimulus for young children. Beginning as an 8-week summer session, the program was expanded to a full-year program in the early fall of 1965, with a budget of nearly \$100 million. The program focused on providing educational, health, and parental support assistance to disadvantaged preschool children and became known as Head Start (Severns, 2012).

In 2007, President George W. Bush reauthorized the federal Head Start grant with some major accountability reforms. Head Start grants would be funded in 5-year intervals whereas previously they had been funded in perpetuity as long as the grantee did not have serious financial or health and safety problems (Samuels, 2013). This change meant that low-performing local Head Start programs would be required to compete for

funding in an effort to increase the quality of the programs. Under the new rules, as Samuels noted in a January 2013 edition of *Education Week*, 122 grantees were notified that month that they would need to recompetete, joining 132 other programs that had been notified in December 2011 of the need to recompetete as well. Also of note, there were about 1700 Head Start grantees that would now be able to expect funding for only 5-year terms. In some circumstances, those on notice for recompetition had managed the grant for decades. According to Samuels, grantees notified that they would need to re-compete sometimes referenced low-level compliance issues as the reason for the struggle and referred to the large number of regulations in the Head Start program (Samuels, 2013).

Head Start Reforms and Compliance Challenges

During the 2012 Obama administration, the recompetition process for local Head Start grants entitled “designation renewal” began with intensity. Further, Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, former director of the Office of Head Start, shared with *Education Week* in November 2013 that numerous changes had been put into place for Head Start including competition for funding and changes in monitoring (Fuentes, as cited in Samuels, 2013).

Removing overly burdensome or redundant requirements was a goal of the 2007 Head Start reauthorization. According to HHS officials, Head Start had 2400 performance standards in 2015. HHS has reorganized, removed, and updated these standards to reduce the burden on providers and limit “micromanaging,” shifting Head Start from a “compliance-oriented culture to an outcomes-focused one” (Lieberman, 2015, p. 1).

Although these well-intended changes refocused critical energy on the quality of the teaching in the program, the challenges lay in the fact that these new areas of focus

were added to the existing regulations. Gordon and Mead detailed one such example in their March 24, 2014 opinion piece for The Brookings Institution, noting that Head Start’s learning framework had 11 domains, 37 subdomains, and more than 100 examples of what Head Start programs should do. In their opinion, such extensive dictates actually limit quality (Gordon & Mead, 2014).

W. Steven Barnett, the executive director of the National Institute of Early Education Research at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, has seen the need for change from a regulations standpoint as well. Head Start must toss out a good portion of the regulations that have hamstrung innovation in the program, he stated: “There’s a good intention behind every single one. And each one is a paving stone on the path to hell” (Barnett, as cited in Samuels, 2014, p. 13). Without those regulations holding programs back, Barnett argued, Head Start could focus more on outcomes for children rather than compliance issues; then the program could become a true laboratory for child-development research (as cited in Samuels, 2014).

Sara Mead from Bellwether Education Partners noted in *Renewing Head Start’s Promise: Invest in What Works for Disadvantaged Preschoolers* that although these changes were encouraging, “Head Start continues to lack clear, comprehensive goals for program performance; to overemphasize compliance; to require programs to do too many different things; and to pay too little attention to curriculum” (Mead, 2014, p. v).

As recently as June 2015, Head Start was further acknowledging the complicated and overbearing regulations in what appeared to be an honest attempt to better manage them. Further, the Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell said, “By reducing the unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and applying the latest research and best

practices in our Head Start programs, we will help more children onto the path of success” (Burwell, as cited in Samuels, 2015, p. 1).

Although there seems to be a general consensus that Head Start includes too many cumbersome rules and regulations, questions remain regarding the expectation in real practice for current Head Start grantees.

The County and Public School System Under Study

The county under study is located in the southern part of a mid-Atlantic state; it is located on a peninsula bordered by two rivers on the east and west sides of the county and a bay to the south. The county has a long and proud tradition of agriculture and is home to a thriving Amish and Mennonite community in the northern end of the county. Further, the northernmost areas of the county are only 60 miles from Washington, DC, and it is not uncommon for people to live there and commute to DC or other metropolitan areas.

In the southern end of the county is a military base, which is home to a highly technical military industry with a skilled and highly educated workforce including a large number of military pilots, engineers, mathematicians, and related professional workers. Further there are sizable numbers of well-trained workers that provide maintenance for aircraft. Numerous military contractors have offices immediately outside the gates of the base. For the past 10 years, the county under study has been identified as one of the fastest growing counties in the mid-Atlantic state with increases in the number of residences and children attending the public school systems. According to the most recent census results, there were 111,413 residents in the county with a median income in 2015 of \$88,190; 79.1% of the population were identified as White, 14.5% as African

American, and 3.1% as two or more races. The county's poverty rate was 8.6% (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

Public transportation in the county is very limited with the transit system's small buses running on a limited schedule. Retail shopping exists in the northern, central, and southern ends of the county with most options located centrally. Grocery stores are available in each zone, but there are fewer options in the area of study, where the concentration of poverty is highest and the transportation needs are the greatest. Local government is aware of the potential "food desert" that exists with recent closings of large grocery stores in the southern portion of the county.

The school system under study has 19 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools with 1 technical and career center, serving a total of nearly 18,000 students. The number of students, having historically increased at a rapid rate, is now remaining relatively flat. Ten percent of the student population receives special education services, and 27.2% of elementary students receive Title I support services. A very small percentage of students are identified as having English as a second language. Approximately 1000 students have parents that are active duty military.

Nearly 40% of the system's elementary students receive free or reduced-price meals (FARMS) (State Department of Education [SDE], 2015), with dramatic differences in eligibility based on regions of the county. Approximately 30% of the students living in the northern end of the county are eligible for FARMS; less than 20% in the central portion of the county, where real estate prices are highest and most of the base-affiliated people have chosen to live, are eligible; and substantially greater numbers of students in the southern end of the county are eligible for FARMS. The study area, although the

center of technology because of the military base, is also where the largest concentration of poverty exists. Much of the county's subsidized housing is located in this southern corridor, and four of the elementary schools are designated as Title I, with 60%-80% of students receiving free or reduced-price meals. Although the largest focus of poverty is located in the southern end of the county, the poverty within each regional zone of the county is significant and debilitating (SDE, 2015).

The School System's Early Childhood Programs

The school division has had a number of early childhood programs for the past 10 years including prekindergarten, preschool special education, infant and toddler programs for young children with identified learning disabilities or delays, and full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds. All early childhood programs are staffed with credentialed early childhood teachers and para-educators that work collaboratively in one or multiple classrooms depending on enrollment and budgetary factors.

The school system historically has offered a half-day prekindergarten program for 4-year-olds in every school, with additional spaces available at Title I schools. Two Title I schools have half-day 3-year-old classes, known as preK-3, available for financially eligible, at-risk 3-year-olds. The Code of State Regulation (COSR) also dictates that preK-4 can have no more than 20 students assigned to a class, and for preK-3, the recommended class size cap is 17 students for a teacher and para-educator. The COSR regulation 13A requires that income-eligible children be served first and then, if space remains, non-income-eligible children may be admitted (State.gov, n.d.).

Each year, an increasing number of families have applied for admission to preK-3 and preK-4 for the limited number of spaces available, resulting in a large number of

wait-listed children who clearly would have benefited from preK. Although parents in the community have been aware of the income eligibility requirement, they have conveyed their displeasure with the lack of space through complaints to the board of education members, the superintendent's office, and the supervisory staff managing the application process. Further, principals routinely have reported parental frustration about the lack of prekindergarten space for their children, disagreement with the income-eligible criteria, and irritation with last-minute notification of space available for over-income families. Many over-income families have pursued private preschools often affiliated with local churches. It has not been uncommon for parents to express frustration that they made too much money for their child to be eligible for preK yet not enough to comfortably afford a private preschool. There has been consistently a substantial wait list averaging about 100 children.

Prior to 2012, there were 680 prekindergarten half-day spaces in the school system and approximately 1300 students enrolled in kindergarten. Based on this information, fewer than 50% of kindergarten students had public prekindergarten experience and those were primarily students that were income eligible.

According to the 2000 census, 1828 people resided in the county and worked in Washington, DC (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Further, according to 2013 information, nearly 80% of the 57,308 county residents representing the workforce were employed within the county whereas 20% worked in locations outside the county. Because 35,000 county residents were between the ages of 20 and 44, they would be most likely to have preschool or school-age children (County Department of Economic and Community Development, 2013). Based upon this information, an inference can be

made that working families with young children would desire and benefit from a full-day public preschool experience in lieu of costly daycare.

Because the county has been a rapidly growing community in the recent past, two new elementary schools have opened in the past 5 years, thereby increasing prekindergarten spaces to a county total of 760 half-day spaces in 2015.

In 2016, according to school system enrollment information, 780 preK-4 spaces were available. Additionally, there were 68 half-day spaces for 3-year-olds in preK-3 located in two Title I schools. A total of 1350 students attended kindergarten in the school system.

History of Head Start in the County Under Study

A local nonprofit organization operated Head Start in the county for more than 40 years. The grant, operated by the nonprofit organization, provided services mostly to children in the southern part of the county, with some service in the central portion. Bus service was provided to children residing in the area of study, but no service was available in the central county. Parents provided transportation to enrolled students in the central portion of the county. The nonprofit organization's data reflected a troublesome attendance rate of 73% and identified transportation challenges as the reason for compromised attendance. In the state's three southern counties affiliated with the nonprofit organization, 593 students received Head Start services in 2012. Teachers routinely were not credentialed educators (Nonprofit Organization, 2012).

In 2012, the nonprofit organization was notified that the Head Start grant was going into "designation renewal" and would be open for competition. The school system decided to apply for the grant and was awarded the grant in 2013 for a 5-year term.

Current Data on Head Start in the School System Under Study

The county's Head Start program began in late August of 2013 at three sites within the county: Elementary School 1, a school-wide Title I school located in the area of study; Annex 2, a complex of mobile classrooms located directly behind an elementary school in the central portion of the county; and Elementary School 3, located in the northern portion of the county. In 2015, a fourth site, Elementary School 4, located in the area of study, gained a Head Start class. Services are provided to 3- and 4-year-old students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with the majority of children meeting federal guidelines for poverty. The grant provides \$2.2 million annually in federal funds, as well as a \$28,000 annual training budget, and included a \$100,000 start-up budget.

At the time of this study, 165 3- and 4-year-old income-eligible students participated in the Head Start program at the four regional school sites. Transportation was provided for all students, and the classrooms were staffed with certified early childhood credentialed teachers and trained para-educators. Full-day sessions were provided for 4-year-olds, and sessions for 3-year-olds are half day. Nutritious breakfasts and lunches were served, family style as is the Head Start meal expectation, through the school system's food services department.

The school system was in Year 3 as the grantee of the federal Head Start program. When the system was awarded the Head Start grant, 165 additional early childhood spaces became available for 3- and 4-year-old income-eligible students within the school system's early childhood pathway. Essentially, the Head Start grant, in combination with the existing public school prekindergarten program, allowed the school systems to have

1013 available spaces for eligible preschool students. As a result of the increased early childhood spaces, the most recent wait list for prekindergarten was very low, typically fewer than 10 children, given that over-income children were served if space was available.

As the new Head Start grantee, the school system found the transition to be challenging, particularly in managing school system policies and regulations in combination with Head Start policies and regulations that required compliance to receive federal funds.

Historical Review of Implementation Challenges

In this section, I review a variety of literature from the past 4 decades. The challenges of program and new initiative implementation in school systems have been studied for many years. Much has been written about implementing change in schools and school systems, using federal funds in particular, and the impact of those changes on existing school structures. Although numerous critically important studies have been conducted since 1970, I begin my historical review with the landmark 1978 Berman and McLaughlin study. Supporting studies are referenced following that momentous study.

Landmark study: Berman and McLaughlin (1978). A 40-year-old landmark study conducted by Berman and McLaughlin in the mid-1970s investigated the use of federal funds in program implementation and the lasting impact of the implementation when the funding stream was exhausted (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). The federal programs they investigated were funded with the intent of motivating and increasing educational improvements in federal entitlement programs such as Title I, Title II, Title III, and the ESEA Act Title VII. Berman and McLaughlin discovered that opportunism

and access to federal funds often drove school systems to implement new programs that otherwise could not have been afforded. School systems often did not have a comprehensive understanding of the programs they sought to implement but did not want to refuse the available funding. A lack of long-term planning or meaningful intention complicated the implementation of these programs. Additionally, although money motivated the systems to adopt a program, money failed to sustain the changes. Berman and McLaughlin concluded that ultimately the impact of these federally funded programs in the 1970s largely failed to result in the anticipated educational reforms or improvements.

Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found several key insights from their comprehensive study. They noted especially that there were no easy answers about what constitutes success of federally funded programs and how to replicate those perceived successes in schools. They also determined that program implementation and continuation are impacted by numerous factors including planning, execution, and long-term maintenance tactics within the organizational structure of the school system. They concluded that it takes 5-7 years until the long-term impact of an innovation can be determined.

On the positive side, Berman and McLaughlin (1978) asserted that federal funds foster innovation through improved professional practice. They recognized that *mutual adaption*, the process by which a program is adapted to the specific institution setting and the people affiliated with the program, determines whether the change will have a lasting impact. In essence, mutual adaption means that sufficient buy-in exists and there is collaboration among all parties involved. This level of shared ownership can positively

impact the outcome and sustainability of the innovation. In particular, they noted the sustainability power of involving teachers in decision making and solving everyday problems, the active participation of principals in the change process, and tangible specific staff training. In summary, Berman and McLaughlin learned that it is the people and their commitment that maintain the program or innovation long after the federal funds are expended.

Study finding federal oversight and bureaucracy as impediments to reform.

A few years earlier, Murphy (1971) conducted a study of the implementation of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). He also described implementation as a complex process. He found that Title I of ESEA presented substantial implementation challenges and identified federal oversight and bureaucracy as impediments to reform.

The intent of Title I was to help those children and families living in poverty with federal funds to support and enrich their educational experience. With the federal funding came policies and regulations that required strict oversight and compliance. Murphy's study noted the conflicting priorities between federal and state control of schools with entitlement programs challenging the notion of who served as the ultimate authority. In conclusion, the study found that federal policy changes move slowly, politics are heavily involved, and substantial time is needed to make reforms. The actual implementation of these proposed changes is the most difficult job (Murphy, 1971).

Congressionally mandated study on the impact of federal policies on schools.

In 1983, a summary report of a Congressionally mandated study entitled "Cumulative Effects of Federal Education Policies on Schools and Districts" examined various federal entitlement programs including Title I, Title VII Bi-Lingual Education, Title VI Civil

Rights Laws, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and amendments to the Vocational Amendment Act in 1968 (Knapp, Stearns, Turnbull, David, & Peterson, 1983). This study investigated how school systems were affected by federal laws and related funding.

The study by Knapp et al. (1983) concluded that federal funds provide better programming opportunities for the identified population. The intent of those funds is to spur creating thinking and innovation, but with the funding, territorial friction between traditional staff and federally funded staff was noted in this study. The policies and regulations associated with federal funds add complexity and an administrative burden to schools and districts. Finally, of note was the conclusion that policy initiatives take time and involve an adjustment period for schools. In the short term, resistance, confusion, and poorly organized services represent the norm, and program leaders need time to solve problems. After a period of time in what the authors identified as a “settle in” era, people adapt. The first few years of program implementation were identified as the hardest (Knapp et al., 1983).

Study of federal policy versus local needs. Also of interest was a similar study by Elmore and McLaughlin (1982) noting two often-conflicting strategies used with regard to federal policy focusing on compliance and assistance. The authors recognized and acknowledged the long-standing debate between federal compliance and local autonomy. Also cited was a disconnection between federal policy and local needs. Federal funds can spur innovation, as was the case with entitlement programs including Titles I, II, III, IV, and V. Elmore and McLaughlin further found that a disconnection exists between federal policy and local needs. Additionally, they noted that compliance-

driven tasks are easier to measure but do not affect program quality (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1982).

Studies indicating that measuring effectiveness takes time. More recently, other authors and researchers have concurred that it takes substantial time to determine the effectiveness of a change effort. Although Berman and McLaughlin (1978) asserted that it could take as much as 5 to 7 years to determine the effectiveness of a change effort, Firestone (1989) noted that with policy changes driving instructional practice, the process could take even longer. Firestone also noted that the total influence of a policy change could take more than a decade. Given that information, as well as the magnitude of the challenges associated with educational change, it seems essential that policymakers consider the time and expectations surrounding any major change in educational practice before making long-term policy decisions (Firestone, 1989).

Studies of the complexity of change. One of the most cited works on educational change is Fullan's 1991 book *The Meaning of Educational Change*. Fullan stated, "The purpose of educational change presumably is to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures, programs, and/or practices with better ones" (Fullan, 1991, p. 15). Fullan studied education reform and programmatic transformation and found that change is a mysterious process and far more complex than what is typically expected. He noted that educational change is "technically simple and socially complex" (Fullan, 1991, p. 65).

Fullan and Miles (1992) detailed reform efforts of schools and school districts, acknowledging frequent barriers to educational change. These barriers include an overload of transformation projects in public education and the resulting pressure on staff

to accommodate a multitude of changes. According to Fullan and Miles, staff resistance is often cited as the barrier to reform; however, in actuality, poor implementation, including slow progress, staff reluctance, and changes in culture and structure, has been attributed to opposition. More importantly, Fullan and Miles deemed it essential to acknowledge the complexity of the problems in schools in which there are more questions than answers as well as uncertainty regarding how to proceed. The challenges associated with solving these real problems are overwhelming, and solutions have not been developed. The researchers also recognized that with change comes the need for new learning, which often results in staff anxiety during the process.

Fullan and Miles (1992) cited the need for a “cross-role” group to manage change, noting that policymakers and practitioners should recognize and accept a certain amount of ambiguity and anxiety to be present through the change process. Collaboration among administrators, teachers, and parents does not always inculcate reform efforts; Fullan and Miles summed up their view of change by stating, “Wishful thinking and legislation have poor records as tools for social betterment” (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 752).

In summary, the aforementioned conclusions about implementing educational change, although decades old, foreshadowed the same challenges facing school reform efforts today. Bureaucracy, political agendas, an overemphasis on compliance, the challenges of skillful execution of programs, and the maintenance and continuation of initiatives are frequently cited today as school systems attempt to implement new programs. Although the problems associated with implementation have been studied for many years, they have not been solved. The federal government can foster innovation by providing significant funding to spur educational innovations; however, an essential

question for policymakers is how to foster and maintain actual innovation and then replicate and expand the innovation for systemic improvement. McGuinn, Berger, and Stevenson noted, “Federal programs intended to promote innovation have generally suffered from a lack of clarity about what innovation means, how to assess impact, and how to bring successful models to scale” (McGuinn, Berger, & Stevenson, 2012, p. 3).

The impetus for adopting a new program can be politically based, a genuine attempt to solve a problem, or representative of an effort to quiet critics. The use of federal funds, while intended to spawn innovation and improved practice, is often bureaucratic and complex. Implementation of educational change is complicated, time consuming, and highly dependent on the people putting legislative intent or theory into practice, which will determine the ultimate success of a reform effort and its sustainability within the school system.

In the present study, an implementation model seemed appropriate. In examining a program that was adopted in the early years of implementation, I determined that implementation science offered the best way to conceptualize the practical application of implementation.

Studies focusing on implementation science and Fixsen’s model. More recent approaches to implementation of reforms have looked to implementation science as the model. In the following section I provide an overview of this body of work and of a specific model, Fixsen’s active implementation frameworks (Duda, Simms, Fixsen, & Blasé, 2012).

Implement equals use. Implementation is defined as “a specific set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions” (Duda et al.,

2012, p. 2). Implementation science is defined as the examination of components that affect the complete and successful use of innovations in practice (Fixsen, Blasé, Van Dyke, & Metz, 2015).

Implementation science began in the medical field to study scientific health care methodologies, as well as proven practices, and to embed them into routine exercise. The belief underpinning this study was that the use of these findings would eliminate inappropriate care (Eccles & Mittman, 2006).

The University of North Carolina's National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), operated by Dr. Dean Fixsen and other research scientists, studies the science-to-service gap in education. Fixsen identified implementation as the biggest cavity in improving education but has determined in his work at NIRN that evidence-based approaches can dramatically improve implementation outcomes. Through a comprehensive review of literature, he and his colleagues identified universal factors in successful implementation that apply to any human service (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). In his estimation, current data are adequate to support quickly developing information on implementation. His goal is to bring science to service, relying heavily on implementation science (Fixsen et al., 2015).

Fixsen has acknowledged in numerous writings, on his websites, in video clips, and in various presentations that human services are not responding or adapting as quickly as problems are changing. He also has noted that human service sciences are much more complex than other sciences due to their "interaction-based" nature. He has asserted that human services are more complicated and challenging than other sciences because "atom-based sciences" are less variable and not plagued with an assortment of

difficult-to-control human factors. Fixsen noted that social programs in practice do not have a highly effective track record of success and conceded that innovations in existing administrative creations and organizations are often defeated by conventional procedures (Fixsen et al., 2015; FPG Child Development Institute, n.d.).

Fixsen and his colleagues have asserted that effective implementation requires changes at the state and federal levels as well as purposeful support systems in place to create the needed change in knowledge, behavior, and attitude (Fixsen et al., 2005).

According to this implementation science work, the three categories of implementation drivers are defined as competency, organization, and leadership. In a 2013 NIRN article, Fixsen defined the implementation drivers in detail:

1. Competency drivers are defined as the approaches to promote, encourage, progress, and sustain the innovation as intended. Competency drivers are then categorized into subsections including enlistment and selection of staff, preparation, training, and performance assessment.
2. Organization drivers refer to the manner in which procedures, routines, and structures are developed for successful implementation.
3. Leadership drivers focus on providing accurate direction for the types of trials and challenges the implementation will create. These complications frequently present as part of the transformation process within the organization. Guidance and support are needed to make judgments, provide supervision, and support organization utility (NIRN, 2013).

The implementation drivers can influence and ultimately improve proficiency to create a more welcoming structural environment as well as positively impact routines and procedures for an evidence-based program of practice.

Also of importance are the four phases of implementation that organizations experience in carrying out the process. The phases of implementation are often nonlinear but with a careful and detailed analysis of what is working and what can be improved, coupled with experience and repetition of best practices, an innovation can become institutionalized and sustainable in the organization. Following are the phases of implementation:

1. Exploration. The organization assesses willingness, studies a potential adoption, and examines the practicability of the proposed change.
2. Installation. The organization confirms the accessibility of needed resources and supports such as staffing, tools, guidelines, and protocols.
3. Initial implementation. The organization learns the new way of work, unravels challenges, and begins to seek to realize the commitment of stakeholders.
4. Full Implementation. The organization sustains and improves practices and protocols throughout the system. Components are effectively operational and cohesive; practices are competent (Fixsen et al., 2005).

Fixsen has created active implementation frameworks with corresponding assessment checklists and guides that are direct, relatively easy to learn, and measurable in practice. “Frameworks provide guidance for purposeful and effective action in complex human services environments” (Fixsen, Blasé, & Metz, 2016, p. 5). The

frameworks foster accountability and have identified targets and metrics to facilitate their use. These documents have been designed to assist organizations and programs in honestly assessing their stages of implementation in an effort to foster improvement. Moreover, these frameworks accept the challenges and obstacles associated with implementation and foster a system of reflection with an emphasis on a data-driven improvement cycle. Fixsen has asserted that with deliberate and purposeful focus, improvement can occur. Using these frameworks, Fixsen's goal is to assist organizations in accessing implementation science to get started and improvement science to get better.

Fixsen has created a practical way to determine how to implement and refine with the ultimate intent of empowering change as well as institutionalizing skillful and effective practices that support the effort. An additional goal is to make the work less taxing for the staff and administrators who oversee it. These implementation frameworks seek to take policy into practice and allow practice to inform policy as part of an ongoing improvement cycle. The frameworks and related checklists are intended to evaluate in a concrete manner best practices currently in place according to the identified competency, organization, and leadership drivers. Implementation teams complete the assessment checklists and also evaluate the phase of implementation. Additionally, they actively solicit and use the insights and perspectives of the staff, families, and community members they serve to drive improvement. By using the frameworks to analyze implementation drivers and implementation phases, policymakers and system administrators can determine next steps while increasing the competence and confidence of the people and systems implementing the innovative program (Duda et al., 2012).

Fixsen has stated that “anything worth doing is worth doing poorly,” as an acknowledgement of the learning process associated with implementation. With this statement, he asserted that learning takes time and that educators can learn from beginning the process of change even with substantial mistakes and errors in thinking. Further, he has said that as an implementation team solves problems, they should expect more problems as the norm. Using a model of *plan, do, study, act*, analysis and reflection of the implementation process are intentional.

Fixsen and his colleagues asserted that implementation is a process that typically requires 2 to 4 years to complete (NIRN, 2013). This timeframe mirrors the time expectation in much of the historical literature surrounding change efforts.

The Fixsen implementation model provided an excellent framework for examining the process underway to implement the Head Start grant in the school system under study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my study was to examine the technical and social factors of the implementation process for the federally funded \$11 million Head Start grant in one school system in a mid-Atlantic state. I used Fixsen’s active implementation frameworks and qualitative case study methodology.

Research Question

The following question guided my case study:

To what extent does the implementation of the Head Start program in the school system under study reflect the Fixsen model and to what extent has it been

influenced by each of the Fixsen drivers: organization, competency, and leadership?

Significance of the Study

As one of the few school systems that have assumed grantee status, the targeted system can benefit from the insights and perspectives emerging from this case study regarding the integration of the Head Start grant into a public school system. There is very little literature regarding a school system's role as a new Head Start grantee following designation renewal. As this case study reviewed and documented grant management and knowledge of the process, including lessons learned by the school system, the findings can potentially assist school systems that are contemplating the application process or beginning activities as new grantees. This case study also can provide useful information for the school system's leadership to consider if the intent is to expand the existing grant and offer more Head Start spaces to eligible children in the future.

Section II: Methods

Introduction

In this section, I explain the purpose of my study and present the research question that drove the study. I also describe the methodology I used to address the question. As noted in Section I, the purpose of my study was to examine the technical and social factors of the operational process of the Head Start program in a public school system, using the Fixsen (Fixsen et al., 2005) implementation model as a framework. A case study was used to examine the implementation.

Research Question

The following research question guided my study of the Head Start implementation process in a public school system in a mid-Atlantic state:

To what extent does the implementation of the Head Start program in the school system reflect the Fixsen model and to what extent has it been influenced by each of the Fixsen drivers: organization, competency, and leadership?

Design

In the following portion of this document, I define the rationale and general design of the case study methodology for this investigation. Case studies often are used in social sciences to tell a true story and provide a unique and useful opportunity to study a phenomenon in depth, with the intent of better understanding a complex situation. Respected researcher Yin (2009) noted that case studies are the preferred research strategy when *how* and *why* questions are being addressed. He asserted that case studies are valuable and generalizable to theoretical propositions. Further, he stated that the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories. Other researchers also have

supported the use of case study methodology when the intent is to deeply understand a particular problem. Merriam noted that qualitative research, which includes case study, is appropriate for the following purposes:

clarifying and understanding phenomena and situations when operative variables cannot be identified ahead of time; finding creative or fresh approaches to looking at over-familiar problems; understanding how participants perceive their roles or tasks in an organization; determining the history of a situation; and building theory, hypotheses, or generalizations. (Merriam, 1995, p. 52)

Moreover, Zainal (2007) noted that a case study researcher is able to delve deeper with qualitative results than is possible with numerical results and to better understand human factors and circumstances through the practitioners' perspective.

With this case study, I sought to fully understand the implementation process of a public school system's federal Head Start program through the lens of the Fixsen implementation science model. The Fixsen model closely aligned with a federal program using evidence-based science. I sought to comprehend numerous how and why questions through this investigation; consequently, case study offered a vehicle to deepen understanding regarding how the Head Start grant had been implemented and how each of the drivers in Fixsen's model had influenced, either positively or negatively, program implementation. In this study, the *case* is defined as the Head Start program, which the school system began to implement in 2013. The process was investigated using several sources of evidence.

Yin (2009) asserted that case studies should use multiple sources of evidence with facts joining in a triangulating technique. Triangulation has been defined as the use of several means of data collection that can lead to trustworthiness and core reliability (Merriam, 1995). This strategy allows for careful comparison between data sets to ensure

that bias or misunderstandings do not falsely skew the investigation's results based on an interview alone. My study using multiple data collection methods to examine the Head Start program implementation followed Yin's and Merriam's findings confirming the notion that triangulation of data increases the likelihood of a qualitative study's being valid. The use of interviews and document reviews allowed me to better and more fully understand the implementation of the Head Start program from multiple vantage points.

Methods

In this section, I identify the multiple sources of information that I used in the data triangulation process for my investigation. I also describe the specific instruments and procedures used in this study. Most of the data for the study were obtained through interviews with Head Start teachers, review of the original grant application and annual reapplication documents, and analysis of a series of Health and Human Services Program Monitoring Reviews for the federal Head Start program. I organized the interview responses and other information using the Fixsen implementation framework. Finally, in this section I explain how I analyzed the qualitative data and used the implementation framework to draw conclusions.

Interviews

My goal as a novice qualitative researcher was to better understand the implementation of the Head Start program from the perspective of the people most closely associated with it. I was seeking the instructional practitioners' perspective on program implementation and, consequently, I interviewed Head Start teachers. I interviewed professional teaching staff that were currently or previously employed by the school system to teach in the Head Start program at some point since 2013.

These semistructured instructional staff interviews were open ended, and I used a preestablished question guide to organize the interview. I allowed individuals to expand on any question or topic they believed to be relevant. As of November 2016, I had identified 11 current and former professional Head Start instructional staff that were currently or previously based in Head Start classrooms within the four identified elementary schools. They were asked to participate in the interview process. Each of the 11 possible participants was credentialed in early childhood, special education, or both; each was currently a practitioner in the public school's Head Start program. Of the 11 interview subjects, 2 employees had previous Head Start teaching experience with a nonprofit organization not identified as a school system, 5 teachers were in their first 5 years of teaching practice, and 4 had multiple years of experience as master teachers in a public school system.

Interview questions. The following questions guided the interviews. These questions are aligned with Fixsen's three implementation driver categories: competency, organization, and leadership:

Competency questions

1. What is your teaching certification?
2. Please describe your teaching or student teaching experience if this is your 1st year of teaching. Specifically, do you have prior Head Start or preK teaching experience; if so, what was the setting (public school, private preschool, church based)?
3. When did you begin teaching in the school system's Head Start program? What made you pursue teaching in this Head Start program?
4. Are you or were you assigned as a singleton or at a multi-Head Start classroom school site? What were your feelings about that assignment? Why?

Organization questions

5. Please walk me through your daily schedule. How do you make scheduling decisions?
6. Have you ever had a full-time or part-time para-educator assigned to you during your teaching career? If so, please describe how you worked together.
7. When do you plan with other teachers and with your para-educator(s)? How is that time structured?
8. How often do you meet as a complete Head Start team? What occurs during those Head Start team meetings?
9. To whom do you report? How much interaction do you have with the person(s)?

Leadership questions

10. With whom do you share your concerns? How do you do so?
11. What are your biggest obstacles? Please describe two or three of these challenges in detail.
12. Why do you think these obstacles exist?
13. How would you remove these obstacles if you had the power to do so?
14. Are you asked for potential solutions to problems or obstacles?
15. Have you seen changes in structure, organization, or procedures from year to year? If so, do you characterize these changes as improvements? Please describe.

I piloted these questions with a non-Head Start teacher who had some knowledge of the program to ensure that the questions were easily understood and specific enough for me to gather useful information. Although I anticipated that each interview would take about one hour, I determined the necessary amount of time needed for the interview with this mock interview process.

Interview procedures. Each interview took 45-60 minutes and was conducted privately at a location selected by the interview subject. With the consent of the individual, each interview was recorded for transcription and was coded for analysis. During and immediately following the individual interviews, I took extensive field notes. These notes taken during the interview served as an initial skeleton to guide me in crafting complete notes recorded as electronic memos at the conclusion of each interview. I used a field note-taking process that focused on “the salience hierarchy” (Wolfinger, 2002). In using this approach, my plan was to record observations that appeared most notable and revealing.

After securing the necessary approvals and permissions, I began interviewing staff in the late fall of 2016 and the early winter of 2017. Prior to beginning interviews, I contacted each of the 11 participants by e-mail and invited him or her to participate in the stud. I also made myself available to speak to interview subjects to clarify the process if requested. Following is the e-mail that I sent to the intended interview subjects:

Dear Head Start Teacher (Name),

I am pursuing a doctorate in Education Policy and Leadership through a local university. The topic of my research is a public school’s implementation of the federal Head Start program. I would like to interview current and former public school Head Start teachers about their experiences with the implementation of the program. I am most interested in the experiences and perspectives of instructional staff. All interviews will be reported anonymously, and the content of the interviews will be generalized. The results of the interviews will be coded and analyzed for patterns and themes in the responses. All transcribed documents and notes will be shared with you to determine their faithfulness to the actual interviews. Copies of the transcribed interview and any notes will be made available to you as well.

I would very much like to interview you for this study; I will provide you with documentation that your identity will be kept strictly confidential in the written report, in full compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at the university. I will schedule the interview, which I anticipate will

take approximately 45-60 minutes, at your convenience at a location of your choice.

Please give serious consideration to my request, as I believe your insights will inform this study, provide critical insights for programmatic improvement to the school division's program, and potentially help other school districts that are seeking to implement the Head Start program as well. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at kmhall105@gmail.com or at 240-298-6358. I will be happy to provide more details to you if you would like them. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Respectfully,

Kelly Murray Hall

Document Review

I reviewed several documents, beginning with the original school system Head Start 2012 application developed by the school division team, including the staffing plan, curriculum and professional development plans, transportation proposal, meal service organization design, and budget. Additionally, I reviewed the annual grant reapplication documents from 2014-2018 for the 5-year term of the Head Start grant. The grant application and annual reapplications were assessed to determine their alignment with the Fixsen framework and to monitor any changes in planned implementation from year to year.

In addition to the original proposal and yearly reapplications, I reviewed and analyzed the five official Head Start evaluation reviews completed by the Health and Human Services (HHS) Division of Head Start over the term of the federal grant. These are official program review documents conducted during the 5-year grant period; they include the Environmental Health and Safety Review; the CLASS Review, which measures classroom climate and culture; Leadership, Governance, and Management Systems Review; Fiscal Integrity/ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection,

Enrollment, and Attendance) Review; and Comprehensive Services and School Readiness (CSSR) Review (HHS, n.d.)

Head Start program reviews are conducted by trained employees or contracted staff through Health and Human Services. Typically these reviewers visit the Head Start program for several days and conduct in-depth record reviews, interviews with staff, observations of teachers and support staff, and interactions with parents. At the end of the specific review, a report is generated and sent to the program and its authorizer, and it is also published on the Head Start ECLKC website (HHS, n.d.). These reports served as the documents reviewed to demonstrate program performance and compliance.

Plan for Analysis

In this section, I discuss my plan for analyzing the interviews and the identified documents. Table 1 details the interview and review topics for the study and their connection with the Fixsen framework. Interviews and both series of documents were assessed according to Fixsen's three implementation drivers—organization, competency, and leadership—as noted on the far left side of the table. Practitioner interview questions have been categorized according to organization, competency, and leadership as well. Moreover, the original 2012 grant application, for the program that began in the 2013-2014 school year, and the annual reapplications for 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 were reviewed for organization, competency, and leadership according to Fixsen's framework. Finally, the program reviews completed by Health and Human Services are clustered by review topic into Fixsen's organizational driver categories. Each of the program review document topics generally aligns with one of the three drivers. The bottom of the table indicates the phases of Fixsen's implementation

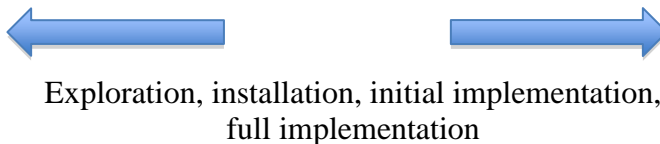
framework: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation.

Interview responses and documents were assessed for phase identification. The graphic indicates that Fixsen's operational phases are not necessarily linear during the implementation process.

Table 1. *Triangulation of Data*

Fixsen's implementation framework drivers	Practitioner interview questions	Grant application and reapplication reviews	Health and Human Services program review evaluations (5)
Organization	5-9	x	CSSR, ERSEA, Environmental Health and Safety (2014)
Competency	1-4	x	CLASS (2015)
Leadership	10-15	x	ERSEA, Leadership, Governance, Fiscal (2016)

Fixsen's phases:



Exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation

Interviews: Transcription, Field Notes, Electronic Memos, and Member Checks

I digitally recorded the interviews for transcription, and I thoroughly reviewed the field notes taken during the interview. I transcribed the 11 digitally recorded interviews and added information from my field notes in the margins of the transcriptions. I also crafted electronic memos continuously of my observations, insights, and reflections following each interview. Repeated readings of transcribed interviews (Saldana, 2009),

field notes, and memos assisted me in determining patterns and in categorizing emerging themes in the qualitative data.

Member Checks

I conducted member checks with my interview subjects. Member checks allow researchers to review and evaluate the documents collected during the interview process for correctness (Brantlinger, 2005). I shared the content of each interview with the individual subject interviewed for his or her review and verification of exactness prior to my analysis.

After multiple readings of the interview transcripts and the related field notes recording my first impressions, I assigned labels to information that was germane or striking. Initially, I began the indexing process using Fixsen's implementation drivers as predominant codes. Additionally, I used verbiage from the framework to create subcodes. As the coding process continued, additional codes were generated as they emerged from analysis of the interview process. As the codes developed, I theorized how the various codes were connected (Löfgren, 2013).

Coding

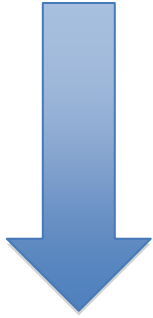
These implementation codes and subcodes were then compared and carefully analyzed in an effort to identify crosscutting topics or patterns of responses. Document reviews were thoroughly assessed for meaning, and thematic insights were recorded as well, using notes and electronic memos. As each document was reviewed, it was compared and noted for alignment with Fixsen's organizational drivers and phases of implementation and for potential repetitions with interview responses.

This “pattern matching” was first identified by Campbell (1975) in the 1970s and years later was cited by Yin (2009), who acknowledged that several pieces of information from the same case study might be related to some hypothetical suggestion. In his work, Campbell identified two possible patterns and then proved that the data matched one pattern better than the other (Yin, 2009). Further, as suggested by Merriam (1995), I wanted to determine if the documents and the interviews were providing similar information. The data from my study were compared with the implementation model to determine if and how the Head Start implementation in the school system under study followed Fixsen’s expected process with regard to implementation drivers and implementation phases.

Coding Table

Table 2 presents the organization as well as the codes and subcodes of the 11 practitioner interviews. The organizational drivers have been matched with the corresponding interview questions, with codes taken directly from Fixsen’s framework. Observations and insights were noted following the interview sections based on the phases of implementation.

Table 2. *Coding*

Fixsen driver category	Interview question #	Possible subcodes	Interviews (11)	Fixsen phases of implementation Impressions
Competency	#1-4	A. Coaching B. Training C. Selection a. Experience b. Certification		Exploration installation Initial implementation Full implementation
Organization	# 5-9	A. System interventions B. Facilitative interventions C. Decision support a. Schedule b. Routines c. Procedures		
Leadership	#10-16	A. Technical time B. Funding C. Adaptive motivation a. Adaptive leadership b. Technical leadership		

Peer Check

In an effort to ensure validity, I shared the various phases of my investigation with a peer familiar with the study and related research. Creswell and Miller (2000) referenced a variety of strategies that can be employed to assist a qualitative researcher in ensuring legitimacy; several of those strategies have already been included in the methods section of this dissertation. This additional peer check, determined to be most effective over time and the course of the investigation, enhances the credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000)

Section III: Results, Summary, and Implications

In this final section, I address the findings related to this study's research question: To what extent does the implementation of the Head Start program in the school system reflect the Fixsen model and to what extent has it been influenced by each of the Fixsen drivers: organization, competency, and leadership? I describe the data collected from 10 document reviews and 11 teacher interviews, which were used to determine the extent to which the school system's Head Start grant implementation aligned with the four key implementation phases defined by Fixsen: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. Additionally, within each phase, evidence of the three Fixsen drivers—organization, competency, and leadership—was examined. I first present my analysis of the implementation phases, which is followed by discussion of the drivers. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the timeline for the conducted review.

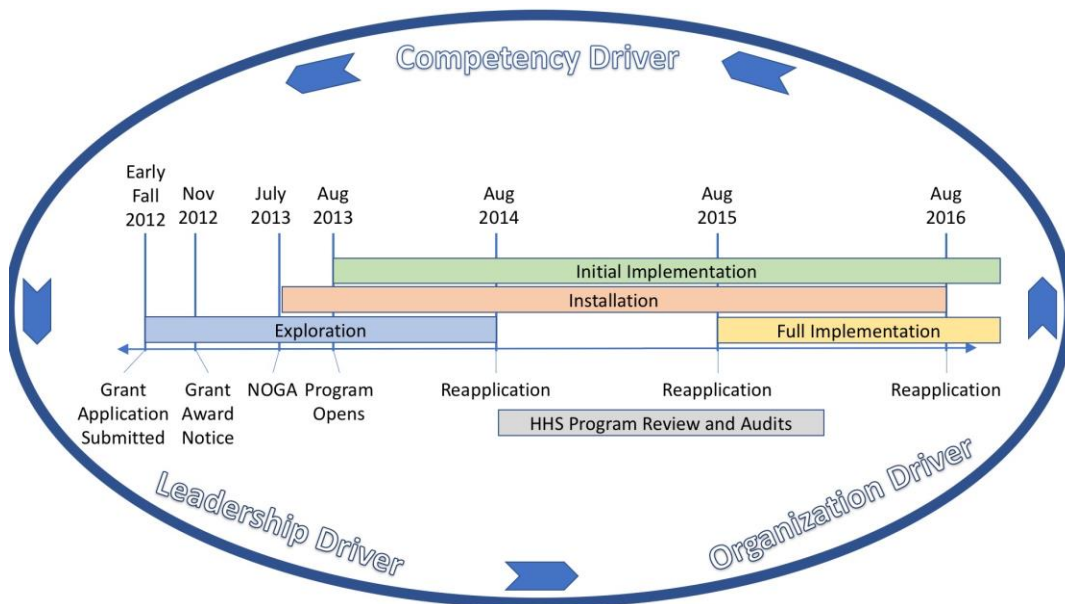


Figure 1. Timeline for the conducted review.

To examine the extent to which the Head Start program followed the phases as described by Fixsen, I analyzed the original grant application from 2012, Board of Education (BOE) presentations and related communication, the annual reapplications from 2014-2017 including budgetary documents, and the five federal program reviews conducted by Health and Human Services officials. To determine the influence of the drivers, I relied primarily on analyses of the 11 interviews, but I also looked for evidence of the drivers within each phase.

Exploration

According to the Fixsen model, the earliest phase of implementation is exploration, and during this time the readiness for change is carefully considered and decisions are made to determine if the proposed implementation is viable (Duda et al., 2012). As part of the exploration process, the organization determines if the implementation meets the needs of the group and predicts whether or not it would be beneficial for the group. During exploration, teams and structures are determined, a communication plan is crafted, and “buy in” is fostered. Thoughtful analysis of the needs of the school and students helps in determining if the implementation would be suitable; judicious assessment of the effectiveness of the group should be conducted during the exploration phase. This concentrated study needs to occur before the organization can fully execute the innovation and ultimately sustain it.

The initial grant application from 2012 was examined for evidence of the exploration phase. The evidence from this document suggested that the school system did engage in many of the best practice activities associated with the exploration phase although in a very compressed format. I present my initial review and analysis of the

exploration phase through investigation of the school system's Head Start grant application.

The grant application. In 2012, upon learning that the previous Head Start grantee had been placed into Designation Renewal status, a team of experienced local school system educators, including the assistant superintendent, executive directors, instructional supervisors, and representatives from the finance department, wrote a detailed grant application, proposing an innovative plan in the hope of securing the Head Start program and including it in the existing early childhood pathway in the school system. In this plan, Head Start would serve as a component of a multitiered early intervention plan.

Officials indicated in the grant application that the school system could provide a high-quality early childhood program for traditional Head Start students using the existing prekindergarten model in place. The actual proposal called for providing an academic program to the most needy children, first using federal Head Start funds and then using the existing state and locally funded prekindergarten program to accept remaining four-year-olds with or without an economic need in rank order. Consequently, the design team believed this strategy would provide more spaces for 3- and 4-year-olds within the county and move the school system closer to a universal prekindergarten model. Further, the school system, having received and successfully managed numerous federal grant programs through the years, maintained that managing the Head Start grant would be similar in expectations and requirements.

The school system's noted intent was to provide more school-based instructional service to financially eligible children and to address a substantial readiness and

achievement gap as indicated by the state Model for School Readiness (MSR) assessment results. The readiness gap was most pronounced for students living in poverty. The MSR was the most comprehensive assessment of kindergarten readiness recognized in the state at the time (State Department of Education, 2012).

The plan, as outlined in the application, would embrace Head Start as a companion program to the system's prekindergarten program, having a classroom teacher with the same teaching credential and student-to-teacher ratio as required in the public school preK classrooms. Each Head Start teacher would be certified in early childhood education and each para-educator would meet the standards for highly qualified instructional assistants currently in place in Title I schools, which required an associate's degree or a passing score on the Para-Pro Assessment. The staff would be employees of the public school system and as such would be entitled to the protections and benefits offered. The staffing plan ensured that each teacher and para-educator exceeded the existing Head Start standard; the plan was aligned with early childhood programs in the school system. The belief system underpinning the staffing plan was that credentialed teachers and qualified para-educators with the appropriate training would be able to provide a richer yet developmentally appropriate academic program for Head Start students. The overarching conviction was that student achievement would increase based on the training of the teachers and staff.

The students identified for Head Start would meet the income qualification requirements and would benefit directly from the full complement of Head Start services provided for the child and the family. By adding Head Start to the school system, the most at-risk children and families would receive additional family support services, such

as medical and dental care, connections with the Department of Social Services, and special education for identified students.

The school system's Head Start program would be regionalized throughout the county, with northern, central, and southern school-based locations, in an effort to provide service to impoverished children throughout the county. Further, bus transportation would be provided for every student. The previous Head Start program had not been available to eligible students throughout the county and transportation had been provided only to students living within a very limited area. The school system team asserted that by providing transportation to every student, student attendance would improve and more families would take advantage of the program.

Public bus service was extremely limited in the area, and personal transportation consistently was identified as a challenge in the community for families living in poverty. In the school system plan, Head Start students would share school buses with other public school students. Additionally, nutritious breakfasts and lunches would be served using the food service department in the public school system; the meals would be served "family style" to meet the Head Start requirement.

The Head Start program would have a coordinator with the same credentialing as a principal who would work collaboratively with the leadership of each Head Start site. The coordinator would manage compliance documents, prepare reports, observe and evaluate the teachers and other staff, organize bus service with the transportation department, and communicate directly with families.

The fiscal management of federal monies was to be managed in the same manner as other federal grant programs such as Title I, the 21st Century Grant, and special

education in the school system. These processes and procedures were established in the board of education policies and regulations and were subject to periodic audits. The expectation was that fiscal management systems in place would meet the criteria for Head Start, as it is also a federally funded program.

Letters of support from community advocates and concerned citizens supported the public school's Head Start application. These letters were included in the grant package submission.

The grant application indicated that the school system had done its due diligence in submitting a detailed plan that addressed all required components with a reasonable and sound plan similar to what was already in place for the system's early childhood programs. In addition, the application was submitted according to the established timeline. There was a purposeful inclusion of competent and experienced staff that reviewed and mapped out the various sections of the proposed program that would work together to provide a comprehensive package of services for Head Start. Provisions identified in the grant application were made to address the critical sections of the program.

The school system staff indicated in the grant application that the system leadership would have the necessary skills and authority to recruit, select, and train highly qualified staff, relying on the protocols in place within the human resources and instruction department offices. The human resources office would screen candidates based on verifiable certification in early childhood and special education. Qualified content experts would make instructional decisions, and the appropriate professional development would be purposeful and aligned with curriculum standards. Further, the

school system leadership team was confident that, given the size and scope of the school system's various departments and services, the Head Start program could be fully and effectively implemented and benefit the students as a high-quality early childhood pathway within the school system.

The school system was expecting grant award notification from Health and Human Services in November 2012, thereby allowing 9 calendar months for the system to thoughtfully plan the proposed implementation of Head Start in the 2013-2014 school years. With a school year to plan in more detail, the school system was secure in their belief that the implementation of Head Start could occur effectively.

Installation and Implementation

Three key sources of information informed my analyses of the school system's phases following exploration: the five program reviews and audits conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services, a public presentation by staff to the Board of Education, and the annual grant reapplications. I first describe the content of the reviews and audits, then review the reapplications and discuss how they provide evidence of the school system's progress toward implementing the Head Start program.

Programmatic reviews and audits. Health and Human Services conducts a series of five programmatic reviews or audits during the 5-year grant period. Each review requires trained Health and Human Services personnel to visit the Head Start program for a minimum of several days, inspect student records, examine processes and procedures to ensure compliance with federal requirements, interview staff and policy council members, observe in classrooms, and rate teacher-student interactions.

This school system had all five program reviews/audits completed by the end of the 3rd year of the program. It should be noted that during the 1st year of the program, the 2013-2014 school year, no program reviews were conducted. The following school year, 2014-2015, Health and Human Services program reviews began in earnest. Essentially, all program reviews took place in an 18-month period.

The series of evaluations began with the Fiscal/ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance), which was conducted from January 12-16, 2015. This review monitors the grantee's fiscal management and includes a financial audit, an examination of student attendance rates, a review of student eligibility according to the appropriate signed documentation, and verification that the appropriate family supports are in place. A sample of student records is reviewed and correlated to a statistical pattern that allows Health and Human Services to make mathematically sound conclusions about the student files in their entirety.

In a letter to the superintendent of schools dated February 20, 2015, the results of the Fiscal/ERSEA review were detailed; no areas of noncompliance were noted.

The next program review for the school system was the Environmental Health and Safety review (EnvHS), conducted March 17-18, 2015. The EnvHS assesses the facilities in which the programs are located, ensuring that they are clean, safe, and appropriate learning environments. The review verifies that health and wellness standards are firmly in place, transportation practices are compliant, and staff have had the needed training; it confirms that security screenings acceptable for all staff have been completed. There is also an assessment of food service and nutrition practices to ensure compliance with health and safety standards.

On May 15, 2015, the superintendent of schools received a letter outlining the results of the EnvHS review. The school system was evaluated on 18 standards, and 1 area of noncompliance was noted. All six classrooms at three school sites were judged during this review. EnvHS 1.2 was identified as an area of concern because one of the classroom doors was not marked with an EXIT sign and, therefore, the route to safety in the case of an emergency was not clear.

The school system was given 120 days to correct the identified area of noncompliance. A March 28, 2016 follow-up letter from Health and Human Services to the school superintendent referenced a follow-up site visit on February 10, 2016 to verify that the previous findings of noncompliance had been corrected. The letter indicated that the deficiency had been rectified and the review had been closed.

The next program review was the CLASS review, conducted from November 3, 2015 to November 15, 2015. This systematic observation of classroom teachers and the classroom climate is a requirement of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. This act requires that a valid and dependable observational tool be used to assess classroom quality and student and teacher interactions across 10 dimensions.

CLASS is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System that is used for this purpose. It measures three areas of classroom quality: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. All 10 dimensions are scored on a 7-point scale; scores are identified as being in the Low Score Range (1-2), Middle Score Range (3-5), or High Score Range (6-7). Scores from each observation are averaged for the grantee to generate grantee-level dimension scores. These dimension scores then generate the grantee's three domain scores. The domain scores are compared to the national average

for all Head Start grantees assessed on CLASS during that year. Domain scores that are in the bottom 10% nationally can cause the grantee and program to be placed into designation renewal. Additionally, CLASS scores can help to drive instructional improvement, goal setting, and professional development, and to define programmatic enhancements.

In a letter to the superintendent dated December 9, 2015, the CLASS scores were shared. All scores were in the middle-to-high range for the domain, and the school system substantially exceeded the national average of scores completed in 2015. These results were particularly significant given the importance of satisfactory CLASS scores and the potential for designation renewal if the scores do not meet the benchmark.

The Comprehensive Services/School Readiness (CSSR) review was conducted February 9-12, 2016. CSSR measures 30 Head Start standards that encompass the collaborative partnership with parents, including communication, training, and education program offerings for families; referrals, screenings, and education regarding special education services if a disability is suspected; tracking of health services including mental health; and monitoring opportunities for families to participate and access services. Staff credentials and the use of an approved curriculum also are evaluated during this review. Classroom organization is monitored and transition services for students are judged.

In a letter to the superintendent dated March 23, 2016, all 30 assessed and evaluated areas were identified as compliant. No concerns or recommendations were noted.

Finally, in early June 2016, the Leadership/Governance/Management Systems (LMGS) review was conducted over a 2-day period. The LGMS assesses programmatic

goal setting and community needs and verifies that staffing, fiscal, and comprehensive services are in place and fully compliant with Head Start standards. In addition, staff and policy council interviews are conducted.

In a letter to the superintendent from Health and Human Services dated August 11, 2016, a summary of the LGMS review was shared. No areas of noncompliance were noted; no recommendations were offered.

The school system underwent the five required program reviews in 2 school years with excellent results. The most important CLASS assessment had a very positive outcome, the other evaluations were successful, and the only indication of a problem was a missing exit sign that was quickly corrected. From the Health and Human Services viewpoint, the school system's Head Start program was effective and high functioning.

The chart of program reviews and audits, monitoring dates, and dates and specifics of received results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. *Health and Human Services Program Reviews and Audits*

Program review	Monitoring date	Result and date
Fiscal/ERSEA	January 12-16, 2015	Compliant, February 20, 2015
EnvHS	March 17-18, 2015	Noncompliant, March 15 Exit sign Compliant, March 28, 2015
CLASS	November 3-15, 2015	Scores acceptable, December 9, 2015
CSSR	February 9-12, 2016	Compliant, March 23, 2016
LMGS	June 2016	Compliant, August 11, 2016

Annual reapplication documents. Each year, the Head Start program leadership for the school system is required to submit a reapplication that is noncompetitive. In

these documents, planned changes to existing structure are detailed, including a rationale for the changes, a budget narrative is included, and any fiscal adjustments to the plan are made. It should be noted that despite any planned changes in the reapplication, the grant award amount remains the same. The school system has submitted four reapplications to date for school years 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and for the upcoming 2017-2018 school year.

The reapplication documents have included changes in staffing yearly. Dual-certified instructional specialists with general education and special education certification were added in Years 2 and 3; an additional half-day session of 3-year-olds was added with a part-time certified teacher and a qualified para-educator. A program specialist para-educator was hired in Year 4 to support compliance tasks and to provide additional classroom support when needed. The organizational and physical structure of the school system's Head Start program also changed substantially; those changes were detailed in the reapplications. In Year 2, the 4-year-old classes were transitioned to full-day sessions, and the program was expanded to a fourth elementary school site. In the most recent grant reapplication for the upcoming school year, the Head Start program's northernmost site will be moved to the northern central site.

Installation. Installation, according to Fixsen's implementation model, occurs when the program or innovation develops protocols, makes purposeful changes to a variety of organizational configurations, selects the staff, and initiates training for these initial implementers. Data systems are determined, procedures are analyzed, and potential problems are identified. Communication connections and processes are instituted (Duda et al., 2012). Fixsen referred to the exploration and installation phases

as periods of time during which careful and thoughtful planning occurs, resources are secured, processes and procedures are aligned with regulations, and the change process is managed. Fixsen noted, however, that the phases do not always proceed in a linear fashion (NIRN, n.d.). Such was the case with this school system where it appeared that exploration and installation were happening almost simultaneously, as the team was investigating how to structure and organize while installing equipment and materials and communicating to the community that they had become the new grantee.

As explained below, the installation phase overlapped significantly with exploration due to the timing of the grant award notification. A review of the Board of Education presentation and related internal documents from July 10, 2013 were the key sources of evidence for the installation phase.

Award of the Head Start grant. In April 2013, the school system was notified by the Office of Head Start that they had been preliminarily selected as the new grantee and that, following a negotiation process, the grant would be officially presented. A start-up allocation of \$100,000 was requested from the school system and provided by Health and Human Services to begin ordering instructional materials and classroom furniture (Board of Education, 2013). Representatives from the school system's departments of curriculum and instruction and human resources met with the previous grantee employees to share the school system plans. Employees of the nonprofit Head Start program were encouraged to apply for positions for which they were qualified. Information about anticipated staffing positions was posted on the school system website for interested and qualified applicants.

The Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) was not officially issued until July 1, 2013. No hiring could begin until the NOGA was in hand and the local Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners had approved the acceptance of this grant, per local policies and regulations. With a planned start date to coincide with the opening of school in late August 2013, the school system had 6 weeks to hire and begin training the Head Start program staff, select students, structure bus routes, and notify families.

Given the very short notice, the Health and Human Services regional Head Start office assigned to the school system did offer the school system the option of delaying the official start until after the winter break in December 2013, stating that the program could begin in January 2014 (Board of Education, 2013). The school system design team considered this option carefully but opted to begin on schedule on behalf of the students the grant was intended to serve. With the previous nonprofit organization's having lost the grant, a delayed opening for the school system would result in 165 students' spending the entire fall semester with no services at all.

It was for this reason that the school system pushed forward with a late August 2013 opening. Despite this compacted timeline, the school system acknowledged in a Board of Education meeting in the early summer of 2013 that it wished to proceed and open in August. School system officials acknowledged that they felt a moral obligation to open despite the timeline delays and communicated this intent to open in August publicly at a presentation to the Board of Education (Board of Education, 2013).

Immediately following the necessary local approvals to accept the awarded Head Start grant, the design team and various departments interviewed and hired the coordinator, teachers, and other support staff; secured student records from the previous

grantee; and offered spaces to rising 3- and 4-year-old students. In the presentation to the BOE, it was noted that 223 applicants had applied by early July for Head Start positions in the school system. Bus routes were developed and recently ordered materials for classroom setup were inventoried and sent to the school sites. Materials and equipment from the previous grantee that conveyed to the school system were also examined, accepted or rejected, and inventoried. Enrollment procedures began and followed existing school system policies while school system staff worked quickly to learn enrollment procedural expectations from Health and Human Services.

The school system used the plan submitted in the application, although lacking in detail, to open the program. With the required local approvals secured, the school system immediately moved into installation in July and August 2013 while continuing the exploration process and assessing readiness for the beginning of the new school year. Under the best of circumstances, this compressed 6-week timeline would have been challenging, but with a new program, it was problematic from the onset.

Challenges with organizational structures, logistics, competing regulations, and establishment of routines and procedures with a staff new to Head Start were apparent. Organizational challenges were present almost immediately. Significant challenges regarding family-style meals, hours of program operation, and transportation issues compounded the problems. The half-day sessions were structured according to Head Start regulations with 3 hours and 15 minutes per session. The school system's half-day prekindergarten class structure consisted of 2 hours and 45 minutes. With the differing time schedules, it became difficult to share buses with prekindergarten students as originally planned. Separate bus routes created for Head Start were costly. The cost of

transportation to accommodate this adjustment in time was \$500,000 for the 1st year of Head Start (BOE, 2013-2014).

Further compounding the time problem was the contractual obligation to provide for teachers a 30-minute duty-free lunch, which required classroom coverage to ensure student safety. The support staff could cover the student supervision; however, the Head Start regulation required that students eat family style with the classroom teacher present. Although the school system had planned for the family-style meal, they had not planned for the supervising adult to be the classroom teacher. This situation necessitated a complete revision of the planned schedule and the inclusion of paid hourly staff to provide additional classroom coverage to ensure compliance with the Head Start regulations and the local teachers' contract (HHS, n.d.; XX Public Schools, n.d.).

Transportation for students to and from school was a necessary support system; however, determining bus routes for the initial classrooms and creating separate bus routes exclusively for regionally placed Head Start students resulted in some children being on the bus for an hour each way. This lengthy bus ride fostered challenging behaviors from students. To further complicate matters, parents were frequently not at the assigned bus stops to meet their children at the end of the day; consequently, the children were returned to the school. The Head Start and school-based staff remained on site with the children, contacted the parents to explain the situation, and requested that they come to the school to retrieve their children. Often parents did not have reliable transportation to come to the school, so the school system staff had to contact the school system pupil personnel workers to drive a child home after securing parental permission to do so. Two vehicles were purchased in Year 2 to facilitate parent access to the school

as well as needed resources and, equally important, to enable trained Head Start staff to drive children home when the need arose (XX Public Schools, 2015).

Installation to initial implementation. According to Fixsen, initial implementation is characterized as a period of time during which the organization learns from mistakes, celebrates successes, continues to build positive momentum and support for the innovation, and makes comprehensive changes. It is also a time during which all of the mechanisms of the program are in place and the supports begin to function. Fixsen and colleagues further noted that expectations are managed in the initial implementation phase (Duda et al., 2012).

In the following section, I describe my examination and analysis of the annual grant reapplications and the five programmatic reviews and audits from Health and Human Services, as well as my consideration of teacher responses from the interviews.

In the case of this school system, initial implementation began in August 2013, when the school system opened Head Start classrooms at three regionalized elementary school locations as planned and noted in the grant application while the installation phase was continuing. Half-day programs lasting 3 hours and 15 minutes per session were offered to 3- and 4-year-old students, with bus transportation provided. Twenty students were assigned to the 4-year-old classes and 17 students to the 3-year-old classes. A certified early childhood teacher taught each class; a para-educator also was assigned to each classroom. When the new school year began, 18 school system employees were in place.

Review of the four annual aforementioned reapplications revealed substantial programmatic adjustments that impacted student services, staffing, and related

organizational structures. Data from teacher interviews revealed palpable frustration and the need to problem solve on an ongoing basis. The teaching staff identified a need for additional training in how to meet the needs of challenging students, a lack of clarity within the school community about Head Start, frustration with competing school system and Head Start regulations, and a variety of other obstacles detailed in the next section. Thus, it appears that installation and initial implementation were occurring concurrently during Years 2, 3, and 4 due to the significant changes that were taking place in program structure and organization.

During these two overlapping installation and initial implementation phases, the original Head Start 4-year-old program, which had been a half-day program, became a full-day program in Year 2. The leadership team indicated in the reapplication that a full-day program could better meet the learning needs of 4-year-olds in the Head Start program. Also, the transition to a full-day program for 4-year-olds would minimize busing challenges and reduce cost. Instructional specialists (IRTs), with special education certifications, were added in Years 2 and 3 as it became apparent that students had learning and emotional needs that required more direct service from trained professionals. The rationale was that the Head Start classroom teachers would benefit from a coteaching model and the guidance these instructional specialists could bring. Furthermore, a class of 3-year-olds was added in Year 3 and then converted to a full-day 4-year-old class in Year 4. The program expanded from three elementary school sites to four in Year 3 to streamline service, minimize the time students were on the bus, and ensure that needed physical capacity was available at each school site. In 2016-17, the Head Start program was in Year 4 of operation and changes were still being made

Full implementation. In Fixsen's model, full implementation occurs when all components of a program are completely integrated into the organization and are functioning effectively to achieve desired outcomes. Other features include staff becoming skillful in their roles and responsibilities and all processes and procedures becoming routine. The organization's focus should turn to improving and sustaining. Based on the evidence obtained from the reapplications and teacher interviews, however, only parts of these components were distinct.

Although the entire staff was well trained in early childhood and the instructional specialists in special education, the Head Start regulations were still new and problematic. New staff were being added yearly and needed to learn how Head Start worked within the school system. There was an expected gap for these new staff members as they developed the required skills. Fortunately, the staff was relatively stable; although new employees joined Head Start, few left. Therefore, constant retraining of numerous staff was not obligatory. The processes and procedures were in place and functional but were not working with maximum efficiency and adjustments continued to be necessary. The school system's Head Start program was moving toward full implementation, but these data sets indicated an overlap of initial implementation and full implementation phases.

The Influence of Fixsen's Drivers

In the following sections I discuss the findings pertaining to Fixsen's drivers and how these were manifested in or influenced different phases of the implementation process. The three drivers discussed are competency, organization, and leadership.

I relied primarily on analyses of the 11 teacher interviews as my main sources of information. As noted previously, 11 previously employed or current school system Head Start teachers were interviewed in February and early March 2017. Each teacher was asked a series of questions that aligned with Fixsen's three drivers: competency, organization, and leadership. The interviews were recorded and transcripts were generated as planned; electronic memos were created that identified central themes in the interview subjects' responses. The interviews were coded and analyzed for patterns and themes that focused on the frequency of similarities in the teachers' responses. The data generated from the teacher interviews were then compared and analyzed according to their alignment with Fixsen's drivers, using the best practices framework as a guide. Interview responses also were reviewed and correlated with Fixsen's implementation phases.

Competency. This driver refers to accountability practices for hiring, staff selection, training, coaching, accountability, employee ability to learn and incorporate new skills, clarity in job descriptions, and expectations for the work. The questions for this portion of the interview were crafted to assess important components from Fixsen's competency drivers as they related to this school system's Head Start program. The questions focused on credentialing, certification, experience, physical placement in the program, and the driving force that led the teacher to the school system's Head Start program.

Certification and the impact on training. The school system was fortunate to have certified early childhood educators already working in the schools as well as a large candidate pool when the Head Start grant was prepared. Initially, the system needed to

hire six classroom teachers in a very short period of time. The classroom teacher positions were advertised and open to internal employees and external candidates who met the certification requirements. Qualified teacher candidates applied through the school system's online application system, and the human resources department screened each applicant to verify the candidate's certification status. Because the school system was managing the application process, the Head Start program had access to numerous eligible teacher candidates. This large applicant pool allowed the leadership team to interview identified candidates in a screening interview and then offer the selected candidates an opportunity for a second, more in-depth interview prior to the human resources office's offering a position.

Figure 2 depicts the Head Start staffing in 2013.

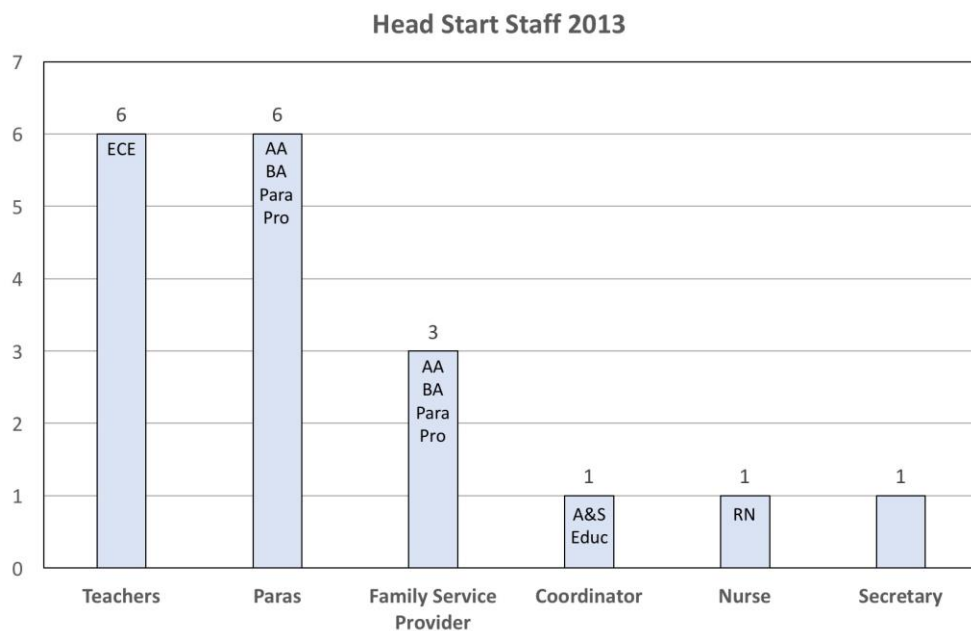


Figure 2. 2013 Head Start staffing.

With expansion of the program, the school system needed to hire an additional three teachers by Year 3; dual-certified instructional specialists also were included in the staffing plan. Despite two classroom teachers' leaving the program in Year 3, the leadership team had no difficulty in locating credentialed teachers from the applicant pool; qualified applicants for the instructional specialist jobs were available even though the position postings indicated the need for dual certification.

All 11 teachers who were interviewed for this study had certification in early childhood education or in special education. In addition, 6 of the 11 current or former staff members held multiple certifications including administration and supervision, English as a second language, special education, elementary education, mathematics, or physical education; one teacher held a counseling certificate. The many and varied multiple certifications and corresponding training that the majority of teachers held brought invaluable skills and experiences to the program, which were critical during the installation phase as staff were hired, processes and procedures were developed, and the needs of the students were being identified. The experiences and training that the teachers brought to the program enabled them to support the initial implementation phase, by solving problems effectively and making critical instructional decisions, and allowed the majority of the teaching staff to focus on understanding the new Head Start regulations because they already had working knowledge of school system curriculum, processes, and procedures. The collective experience and training of the teaching staff provided the school system's new Head Start program with an advantage in implementation. Given the teaching staff's experience, there was less need for general

training, and more time and energy could be placed into specific training and professional development for the Head Start program.

Staff stability and prior experience. Fixsen noted that for a program or innovation to move to full implementation the structures must be sustainable. A stable staff with minimal turnover supports sustainability. The Head Start staff was a relatively stable staff with minimal turnover from year to year. Of note, all of the Head Start instructional staff had been with the program for at least 2 years at the time of the interviews. Although some staff had not been with the program since the beginning of the initial grant, each grant reapplication made adjustments to staffing and included the addition of a classroom teacher and instructional specialists. The majority of the 11 teachers had previous teaching experience prior to joining Head Start, either in a public school setting or in a private preschool or nonschool system Head Start program. Only 2 of the 11 teachers were in their 1st year of teaching practice when they began working in the school system's Head Start program. This level of experience and stability is important as it allows the program to move forward without constant general retraining of new staff.

The teachers' certification and years of experience are displayed in Figure 3.

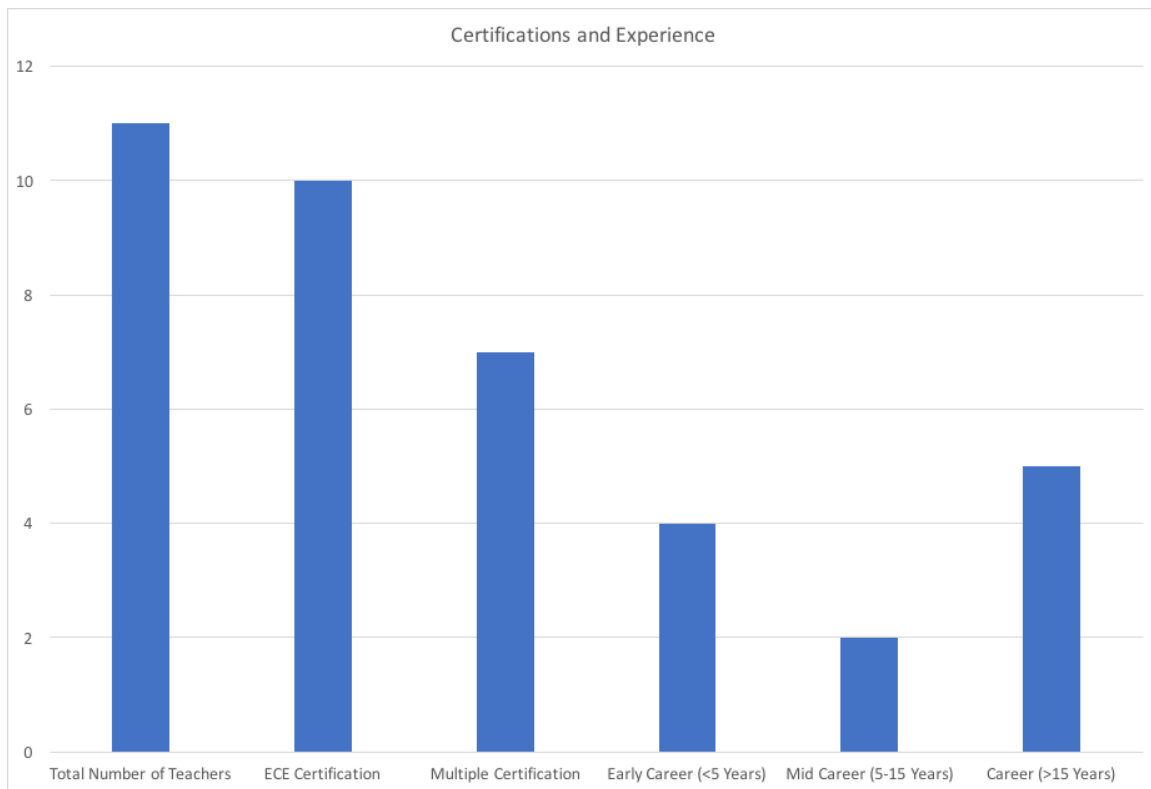


Figure 3. Staffing certification and experience.

Motivation for teaching in Head Start. According to Fixsen, central to an effective implementation is the ability to modify the behaviors of educators and to establish procedures to correct situations and the behavior of well-intentioned adults (Duda et al., 2012). This assertion suggests that the commitment to a program and its improvement is an important factor for competency because it demonstrates the teachers' threshold for adaptation and management of stress. This ability is also important during the installation and initial implementation phases when a program is new, frequent problem solving is occurring, and changes are being made frequently (Duda et al., 2012). Therefore, teachers who wanted to be associated with the Head Start program would be better able and more willing to tap into their own competency skills to do the work.

Fixsen identified the ability for staff to accept constructive feedback and to change their own behaviors for the needs of the program as critical competency criteria (NIRN, 2013). The motivating factors that led the teachers to the school system's Head Start program and their feelings about the intent of the program illustrated their competency and tolerance for working with at-risk students and their realistic expectations about the kind of program they would be joining.

Several teachers, who held the needed early childhood certification required for the Head Start program, noted that they joined the Head Start staff in an effort to secure school system employment. Two were new to the area and were interested in a public school system teaching job for which they were qualified, and Head Start had openings. Of seeming significance, a few cited a "calling" to help at-risk students, one teacher had been a Head Start parent years prior and saw the value of the program and wished to give back, and two had worked in a Head Start program previously operated by a nonpublic agency and respected the emphasis on the family. Tina, a veteran teacher holding numerous certifications and credentials, shared her thoughts on choosing the school system's Head Start program: "I felt that in thinking about Head Start that I could bring all of the different pieces of my career together. It's a culminating situation here for me." She further stated, "For me, it's taking up all of the pieces and components of all of the things that I've done and connecting them up with the mission of Head Start, which I truly believe in." Maura, one of the dual-certified instructional specialists, elaborated on this same idea about choosing Head Start when she said,

I wanted to work with this program, because having worked in so many programs with at-risk students, I always felt the missing link was the "family" link. And supporting the family, and being part of a team, and helping them access the services they needed to support their childhood home, so that we can then in turn

provide the educational service. And I felt like Head Start was the whole program. It has all the parts that help support. It has the housing support, it has all of the things that make it possible for children then to be ready to come to school and learn.

The 11 teachers had personal reasons for pursuing the public school's Head Start program, and all met the required qualifications. Two of the 11 teachers moved on after 3 years with the program. These two teachers held additional areas of certification and transferred to other non-early childhood positions for which they were qualified within the school system.

Managing students with significant behavioral challenges. When the teachers were asked about obstacles and challenges they faced and how they would solve them, six teachers specifically mentioned that the significant challenging behaviors of some of the children were very difficult for them to manage. Based on these teachers' responses, it appeared that they recognized their own limitations in dealing with behaviorally challenged students and their lack of competency in teaching this population of students. The teachers also noted the need for more focused professional development.

The teachers attributed these behavioral challenges to the chaotic lives many of the children experienced outside school and to the severe, often generational, poverty in which they lived. Maura observed the disordered lives of some of the students:

We work with at-risk students, and on a daily basis you're not sure what could happen. We have students that become homeless. We have a student that stays somewhere else because of a social services referral. We have students that leave, we have students come in, and our first priority is to make students feel safe and part of our school family, and on a given day, that changes.

Concerns were noted in that the teachers identified some of the behaviors as so significant that they believed the children had been misplaced in Head Start and would be better served in special education. Zoe acknowledged that she believed some of her

students “need a lot more support” and “many kids have sensory issues and behavioral issues, and you know, things going on where being in a class of 20 might be a little bit too much.” Jillian echoed these behavioral challenges with students when she said, “I’m guessing the severe behavioral problems would be my biggest obstacle, the children just not following the rules and procedures, trying to teach the rest of the class, to children that were threatening the other children and physically violent.” Jillian further asserted that “Head Start has a large percentage of students that live in poverty, that have traumatic experiences from early on, and that’s had a huge impact on their social-emotional development.”

When the teachers were asked how they would resolve these challenges, a recurring response was to alter the classroom placement to a preschool special education setting for some very involved students and/or to place therapists in the schools to meet with the children almost on a daily basis. Tatiana explained: “I feel like if we had behavioral specific people that would come in, like therapists or something, to maybe figure out why the behavior is happening, they could spend more time than what we can because we have so many students.” Also an emphasis on more specific behavioral training was mentioned, suggesting that it needed to occur immediately after the staff member is hired. Diana said, in reference to this training, “I would make that a requirement for new hires, that they have some of that training, at least some of that behavior modification.... That needs to be a big part of training very, very early on.”

Organization drivers. These drivers refer to managerial procedures and processes: reducing obstacles, making objective decisions, developing protocols that are driven by assessment, and making useful procedural recommendations to leadership

(NIRN, 2013). Interview questions in this area focused on organizational drivers such as the daily schedule, work with para-educators, the instructional planning process, and the reporting structure. The themes that emerged from the organizational question responses detailed the importance of a scheduling framework that allows teachers the autonomy to make needed changes, emphasizes the importance of working with and directing support staff, and offers a structure that provides time for collaboration.

Support for a consistent instructional schedule. When asked about their daily schedule, nine classroom teachers described essentially the same schedule and noted that it was provided to them and had been primarily developed by the instructional specialists. Of these nine teachers, most indicated that they had the instructional freedom and autonomy to adjust the schedule based on student needs or their own professional judgment. It was apparent in the teachers' responses, however, that they believed in and supported the schedule that had been provided. Also of note was the sense of cooperation that teachers referenced in regard to developing the schedule. Tina stated,

From the very beginning to where we evolved, the piece that we've come to know as our schedule today in this year, we've gone through a lot of great changes. It's been an interesting process. I believe that the schedule that we have now is very child centered and staff centered and I believe it really works. It's one of the best schedules I've ever had in all of my years of teaching.

Of similar importance were the comments and responses indicating that the schedule had been adjusted periodically; the schedule was consistently reviewed and refined during collaborative planning and when the instructional specialists checked in with classroom teachers. Emelia remembered her 1st year's schedule when she said, "Scheduling decisions were made. They changed a lot that year. It just was what was needed." Tatiana, a less experienced teacher noted,

Our instructional specialist helps us with scheduling. Then we can relate back to her if we see any kinds of issues, things like that. We can make small changes. I was able to switch my small group math around with a story in the center just based on what was appropriate for the students in my class.

Deidre, an instructional specialist, described that flexibility from her vantage point when she stated, “Often times my schedule gets changed because someone has a need. So if we have a behavioral issue at one site, I may need to be there the entire week.... Often times, my days kind of run by what the need is.”

These responses are directly aligned to Fixsen’s detailing of organizational drivers, given the emphasis on processes, procedures, and an evolutionary process. Further, the changes and modifications that the teachers mentioned were indicative of the initial implementation phase, during which there are frequent revisions and attempts to solve problems and improve practice.

Monthly collaborative planning with instructional specialists. Fixsen described coaching and guidance as important components of the leadership and organizational drivers. Based on the responses regarding the Head Start monthly collaborative planning process, the instructional specialists were demonstrating adaptive and technical leadership as they drove the planning and assessment review process with classroom teachers.

There was an unquestionably positive response regarding the monthly collaborative planning led by the instructional specialists. Lisa equated the collaborative planning process to “professional development” as much as curriculum-driven theme planning. Deidre characterized the process as “important professional conversations.” The collaborative planning process consisted of monthly daylong meetings between teachers of the same age group and the instructional specialists. The collaborative

planning mostly occurred on nonstudent days; therefore, no substitute teacher was needed, nor was student instructional time wasted. Emilia noted that this collaborative planning process was always evolving; by the 3rd year, she defined it as “amazing.” Throughout this time, the instructional specialists assisted the teachers in mapping the curriculum, connecting the learning to developmentally appropriate assessment, and addressing what Tina called “nuts and bolts” and Tatiana described as “problem solving.” Two other teachers further described this highly structured planning time as “supportive” and “beneficial.”

Collaborative planning, in addition to being aligned with the leadership and organization drivers, was also indicative of a program moving toward full implementation whereby strong processes and routines were developed to allow the program to strengthen. The collaborative planning improved instructional practice of the teachers and fostered deep understanding of curriculum and assessment.

Para-educators as vital members of instructional teams. According to plan, every teacher was assigned a para-educator that met the criteria for Title I schools in the district: an associate’s degree or a passing score on the para-pro exam. Nine of the teachers had each been assigned a para-educator, and most had previous experience working with a classroom teaching assistant. Most of the teachers cited the importance of collaboration with their para-educators.

Previously, most of the teachers had reported some experience with a para-educator. A frequency pattern emerging in these organizational questions indicated that the teachers relied heavily on their para-educators as critical team members. Further, classroom teachers explained that the para-educator served to facilitate instruction,

support the teacher's efforts, and provide necessary attention to students. Lisa noted that she and her para worked as a team and had a shared responsibility for student success. This perception of an instructional team was reinforced by Jillian, who stated that "we were a team together, [made] decisions together, let them [para] know what my expectations were, and communication was really important"; it was similarly reiterated by Amy who said, "The para-educator that I have now, we work together very well. We make decisions about groupings. We make decisions about one-on-one instruction because she helps with the one-on-one instruction at center time."

When asked about planning with para-educators, the teachers' responses varied. Some described planning whenever possible: before school, after school, at lunch or recess, and when the children were napping. Others, depending on their schedules, as was the case for teachers of 3-year-olds, had a block of time together midday during which they could revisit the plans with their para-educators and adjust accordingly. Nearly all teachers indicated that the amount of time they had to plan with their para-educators was inadequate, but they tried to carve out time during the school day to meet and discuss the upcoming lessons.

Every teacher interviewed, regardless of position, expressed the concern that there was not sufficient time for the amount of collaboration needed. Diana addressed her concern about planning with her assigned para-educator when she said,

That's one thing that's on the table to see if we can solve a little bit better next year. We've all raised it as a concern that we don't get enough time with our para-educators to talk about what our day's going to look like and how we want that to be implemented.

Although the teachers' ability to work with and direct para-educators was indicative of Fixsen's competency driver, the responses also indicated that a better

structure needed to be developed for adequate and consistent planning time. This need to improve the planning process with dedicated time was indicative of the initial implementation phase. Although a few teachers reported having sufficient planning time, the responses indicated inconsistency and the need for a better solution for the teacher and para-educator planning process.

The response codes for the organizational driver questions are displayed in Figure 4.

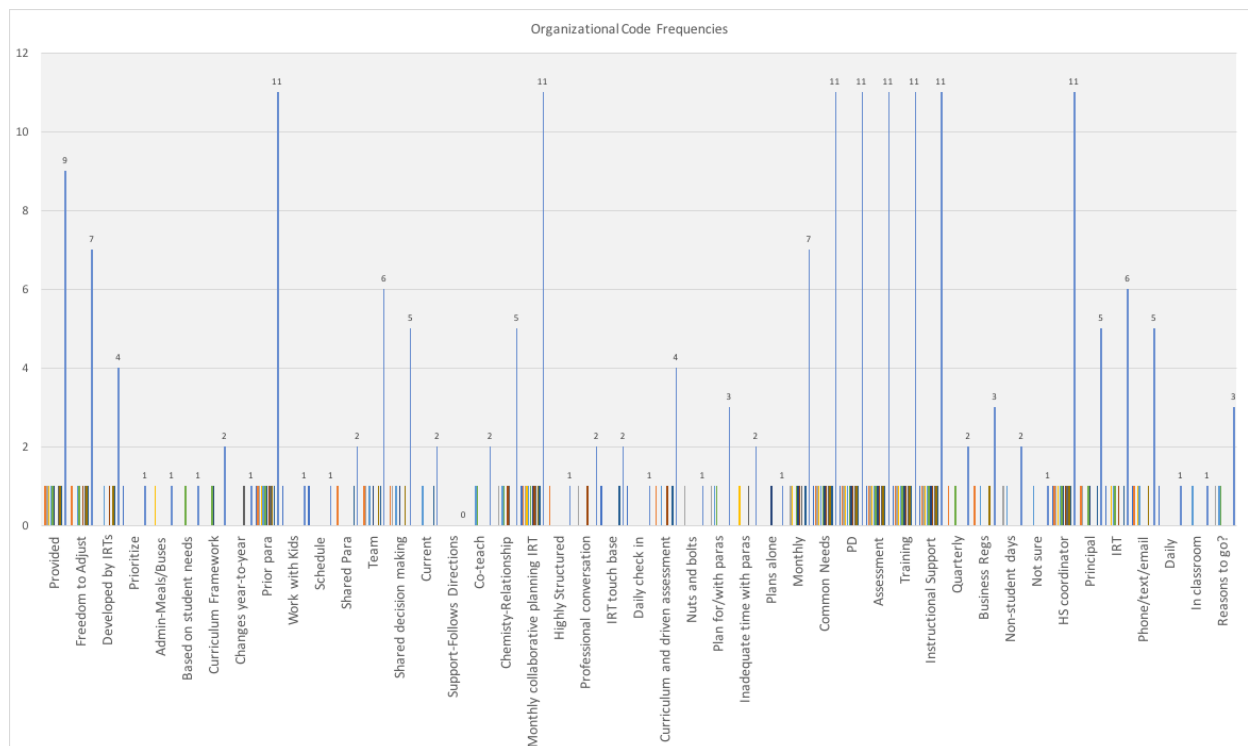


Figure 4. Organizational code frequencies.

Leadership driver. The final interview questions were organized according to the components of Fixsen's leadership driver. The leadership driver includes practices that involve guidance and direction for staff, explaining rationales, active involvement in resolving issues, building consensus, aligning practices with the program vision and

mission, providing clear and frequent communication, and seeking feedback from practitioners to improve the program or innovation (NIRN, 2013.)

The six interview questions pertaining to leadership asked teachers to indicate to whom they shared their concerns and to define how they did so, assessed the teachers' perceptions of obstacles, asked why they thought those obstacles existed, inquired about how they would resolve the obstacles, and asked whether or not their insights were sought. The teachers also were asked if they had seen changes in structure or organization over time.

Role of instructional specialists. The Head Start teachers shared their concerns with administrators, colleagues, and their para-educators via e-mail, text message, or in person, depending on whom they were addressing. All but 1 of the 11 teachers stated that they shared concerns with the instructional specialists to solve their problems. Interestingly, even the instructional specialists noted that they sought the counsel of the other instructional specialists when experiencing challenges. Deidre, an instructional specialist, said the following when speaking about her relationship with the other instructional specialist:

The other IRT is who I, really, if I've got a problem, I talk to her. Originally, we were supposed to have a day that we could meet and plan. Life gets away from you, and we don't have that day anymore, and so it's usually by text or e-mail. We'll just talk back and forth about any concerns we might have. If it is something that we really need to talk about, we'll make a phone call.

Also of note, the instructional specialists clearly had the confidence of and access to the classroom teachers to help them solve problems and improve their practice. Tatiana, a 2nd-year teacher, noted the following about her instructional specialist: "We go to our

instructional specialist because they have a lot of resources to help us...I probably talk to her, if not daily, at least three to four times a week.”

Teachers were asked how much they met as an entire Head Start staff; most reported meeting on a monthly basis and referenced the collaborative planning. Based on the responses, it appears that some time for business or a discussion of regulations was included, but the majority of these monthly meetings focused on professional development and the collaborative planning process. Teachers indicated that these monthly sessions provided them with important instructional support.

When teachers were asked to whom they reported, there was an assortment of answers. All teachers indicated that they reported to the Head Start program coordinator, but several noted that they reported to the principal of their assigned school as well. A few teachers delineated the kinds of inquiries that were directed to the coordinator and the types of questions or concerns that went to the principal. Essentially, questions or concerns with policy or regulation were directed to the coordinator and facility issues to the principal. There was an evident duality of the report structure. Also noteworthy were the teachers indicating that they reported to the instructional specialist, who served as a “liaison” of sorts to help them “solve problems.”

The Head Start coordinator’s primary contact method was e-mail, but teachers indicated that they could reach her with ease; however, they noted that they saw her infrequently. There were varied responses from teachers about how often they interacted with the principal at the four different elementary schools that housed Head Start. Significantly, teachers said it was the instructional specialists who checked on them multiple times per week and, in some circumstances, on a daily basis, regardless of site

assignment. Diana described her relationship with the instructional specialist as one of being a “good liaison between myself and the coordinator, but it’s not a direct report situation. It’s more of a collaborative position, I think.” Sharon detailed a similar contact scenario when she noted that she reported to the coordinator and communicated with her about once a week; however, she spoke with the instructional specialist “a few times a week” and “whenever I need her...If I need her to come, she will figure it out and find a way to get herself here. Or she will answer e-mails, texts.... She’s very dedicated to her job and really does a great job.”

Communication is an essential component of the leadership driver. It is a leadership responsibility to communicate clearly and directly to staff, to parents, to the community, and to the school system about the successes, challenges, and needs of a program. Several communication themes emerged in the teacher interviews that indicated a need for improved communication related to this driver. Messaging, developing “buy in” from the community with a new program, and serving as a protection for staff are associated with the exploration, installation, and initial implementation phases (Duda et al., 2012).

The patterns of responses indicated a clear need for the program leadership to highlight the importance of early childhood education and to actively work to improve the perception of the value of the Head Start program to the school system. Although there was evidence in the teacher responses that the level of understanding about Head Start was improving with elementary school staffs, there was a sentiment that the teachers felt unwelcome and believed their program was perceived as a drain on limited resources.

Lack of integration into the elementary school. All teachers, with the exception of one, were assigned at a multi-Head Start classroom site; one teacher was a singleton at an elementary school. Unexpectedly, numerous teachers cited a feeling of isolation from the school and from their coteachers despite being assigned to a multi-Head Start classroom setting. Zoe stated, “I’d like to see us in our own Head Start center. It would make more sense in a lot of ways.” Further, she articulated: “I think it’s a little difficult being part of a school but not really part of the school.” Then Zoe added to her wish to be in a centralized Head Start site despite having a Head Start colleague at her school: “I think people would feel like they belong, I think.”

Lack of respect and miscommunication. The teachers perceived a general lack of respect for early childhood educators in the community as well as a lack of understanding about the Head Start program in the school system. Tina, a multicertified, experienced master teacher, described this perception when she stated,

I guess I am going to be blunt here. I don’t think in our society there’s a great deal of respect for people who provide early childhood services...I think people think we play all day. I think there is a misconception out there. I don’t know what we can do to fix that but it’s very intricate. This is a very intricate practice. I’ve done some of my best teaching here; I’ve had some of the most intense moments and we are super critical to how these children are going to function all the way through and beyond. I guess we feel so important to everyone that we should be treated with respect. It’s a basic thing.

Deidre, also a veteran and multicertified teacher, echoed Tina’s sense of misunderstanding of early childhood education when she said, “Changing people’s perceptions has been a very challenging obstacle because they really don’t see us as professionals; we were babysitters.”

There seemed to be a prevailing sentiment that after several years, other school system employees did not realize that this Head Start program was part of the school

system; school system staff did not recognize that the program was similar to prekindergarten. There was a sense of hurt on the part of several teachers, as expressed by Amy when she said, “ I just think the schools don’t realize that our children are their children. And they see us as this completely separate entity.” Jillian described a sense that school staff perceived that Head Start drained resources from the school; she summarized that feeling when she said,

I think that being part of the Head Start classroom within a school and not receiving 100% of the support that other classrooms received at that time, that was kind of a problem. It was like we were in a school and the expectations were we’d follow all the school rules and everything, the deadlines that the preK teachers had, we weren’t getting...we didn’t get the same services. I remember ISIC (In School Intervention Center) we weren’t allowed to use at one point.

Tatiana shared a similar experience at another site when she said,

I had another challenge last year. It’s not so much an issue this year, but being recognized in the school as part of the school. This year seems to be much better with that, but last year I was told basically that I couldn’t have support from within the school.... Head Start had enough money that we could handle it ourselves.”

Another teacher clarified this when she stated, “We don’t really belong anywhere.” The teachers did agree that after 4 years, the situation had improved, as there was more awareness of the Head Start program.

Frustration with redundant grant and school system requirements. This theme was reflected in the comments of teachers indicating a high level of frustration with duplication of effort and identifying competing regulations as a significant barrier for teachers. Fixsen’s leadership driver focuses on the need for program leadership to address issues and to attempt to resolve them. There is also an obligation of leadership, as identified in Fixsen’s drivers, to align practices based on the feedback of practitioners. Based on the evidence that emerged in teacher responses, more concentrated efforts and

direct communication about the need to streamline procedures were needed. Although this need may be a significant management challenge, it is the responsibility of leadership to seek to resolve the issue and to clearly communicate efforts to do so. Further, the dual reporting detailed by the teachers indicated that the Head Start program remained in the initial implementation phase with regard to merging two sets of regulations.

Five teachers brought up the perceived redundancy of the regulations required by Health and Human Services and the school system. The teachers acknowledged a substantial redundancy in regulations and procedures with Head Start requirements and school system expectations. Emilia said that the biggest obstacle in her mind was “trying to merge Head Start and what it was into the public school system.” She stated further, “A lot of the regulations and guidelines are definitely geared toward center sort of regulations and in the public school system, it didn’t always merge well.” Deidre, an instructional specialist, echoed Emilia when she described the challenges of rival regulations: “We are trying to take a program that has federal guidelines, and we’re trying to put it into another program that has different guidelines, our school system, and the overlap in trying to figure out where they fit in.” Finally, Emilia simply stated, “I think when the federal government came up with these regulations, they weren’t thinking of a public school system. They were thinking of a center based more along the lines of a childcare center.”

One particularly poignant example came from Sharon, who described recording attendance two different ways on a daily basis because both parties required this task to be completed using their own system. Sharon acknowledged that it had gotten better but it took valuable time away from what she considered more important tasks. Emilia

further expressed her frustration when she said, “I wish that they would just get out of our way and let us teach because we are teachers and we know what we are doing.” She identified what she considered to be a reasonable solution when she suggested that Health and Human Services make a separate set of regulations for a school system.

Changes in organization, structure, and routine. Finally, all of the teachers noted that they were asked frequently if they had ideas that would improve the program; all stated that they had seen changes in structure, organization, and procedures from year to year. These changes were largely considered to be advances. They specifically identified changes in practice and procedures, noting that the adjustments to collaborative planning over time had made a significant difference and represented a constructive innovation. Diana called the changes that she had seen “good changes”; Tina referenced an “evolutionary process.” She elaborated:

The changes have been monumental, even just the staffing piece from the beginning, making sure that we get our lesson planning, the things that we needed to do to take that Head Start concept and bring it into a public school setting.

All teachers indicated that they felt comfortable in that they were asked for their insights as to how to solve problems and improve the program. Deidre said,

I feel really strongly that this is a very high-quality program. What’s going on in classrooms is very, very good instruction. I feel like the children are happy; they’re learning a great deal. We’ve been focused on not only academics but social-emotional, and I believe that we’re starting to be able to retain teachers because they feel empowered because people listen to them.

Tatiana summed up the challenges that were being faced as well as the programmatic emphasis on improvement when she said simply, “It is because it is new. This is a new program and it is going to take time before people really understand it, but it has gotten better every year and people understand it better every year.” Tina also

articulated the program’s improvement when she said, “We simply know more now.” Maura described the program as “continuously being refined,” and Deidre stated, “Every year, I have seen changes, and yes, every year, I believe the program gets better and better, and it gets stronger and stronger.”

The response codes for the leadership driver questions are displayed in Figure 5.

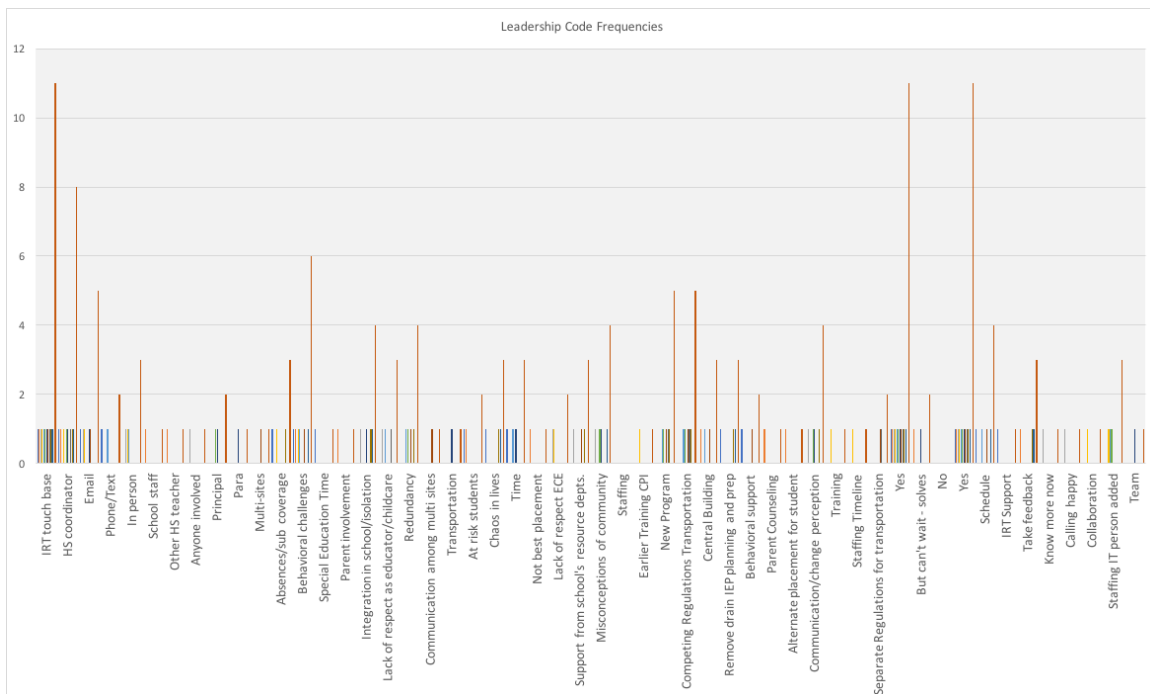


Figure 5. Leadership code frequencies.

Summary of the Phases of Head Start Implementation

In this section, I revisit the research question after reviewing and analyzing all of the data to determine the extent to which the Fixsen model influenced the school system’s implementation of the Head Start program. An analysis of the four phases, followed by an examination of the three drivers, provided a comprehensive comparison. Fixsen’s model had a direct influence on the school system’s implementation of Head Start. Each phase impacted the eventual outcome of the program; each driver affected the time,

experiences of the staff, and the outcomes of important programmatic reviews. Fixsen's model, rich with the wisdom of many innovations, mirrored the experiences, successes, and challenges of the Head Start program's implementation. Although Fixsen's model and his best practices would have been most helpful to guide the implementation from the beginning, it was readily apparent in the evidence from this study that his model can predict the outcome of an innovation.

Fixsen's four phases are important to a successful implementation; each one has unique characteristics and fosters successful transitions into a sustainable innovation. For this school system, exploration and installation were shortchanged as a result of the delay in the notice of grant award. Consequently, the school system did not have adequate time to plan or carefully install critical components of the Head Start program.

Communication and messaging are essential pieces of the exploration and installation phases (Duda et al., 2012). In this case, establishing "buy in" did not occur, seemingly because there was not time to properly socialize the message. If the school system had actually had the 9 months for exploration and systematic installation, perhaps there would have been more emphasis on helping the education community to see the value in the inclusion of Head Start. The comments from the Head Start staff regarding the isolation and frustration many felt, in addition to the blatant statements made to them about the Head Start program's draining the elementary school's resources, illustrated the lack of communication. Although the leadership team could see the value of adding Head Start to the early childhood programs as well as the benefits to the students, it appears that school-based staff could not recognize the same advantage. More time to develop a better communication plan was needed.

Despite the delay and the rapid progression from exploration to installation, the school system moved according to the original schedule, at a cost to the human resources. Frustration was evident in the teacher responses. In reviewing the components of Fixsen's installation activities, it appears that nuts-and-bolts decisions were made quickly to be able to open, but there was a lack of attention to firm training and coaching plans. One teacher's reference to the need for more training in the very beginning regarding how to better address the social and emotional needs of challenging students captured the lack of detail-level planning, as well as the need for training during the installation phase because of the difficulty experienced by teachers who simply did not know how to meet the needs of at-risk children. As noted earlier, time to train the initial implementers before the school year actually started potentially would have made a significant difference in teacher perception.

The grant reapplications indicated a commitment to improve and illustrated thoughtful attempts to meet the needs of students and staff. The addition of instructional specialists with special education backgrounds, the adjustment from a half-day to a full-day program for 4-year-olds, and the expansion of a classroom to provide more opportunities for students all demonstrated the school system's initial installation status and attempts to adapt to the needs of the program and the students it served. These choices were well thought out and driven by data; a clear rationale for the proposed changes in the annual reapplication documents was evident. Fixsen identified initial implementation as a time for learning from mistakes (Duda et al., 2012); the grant reapplications supported the assumption that the school system was functioning in the initial implementation phase each year but learning from the mistakes. Still, it should be

noted, as validated by the teachers, that the program improved, refinements were made, and meaningful programmatic changes were in place to solve real problems.

The five programmatic reviews and audits were conducted during an 18-month period in Years 2 and 3. All were successful, and the school system's program was determined to be fully compliant and instructionally sound. From a federal perspective, Head Start could be classified as being at full implementation status by the end of the 3rd year in the grant cycle. Each review measured important standards of performance and assessed processes, procedures, fiscal accountability, and achievement results that placed the program firmly above the national average. Although the results were impressive, most of these reviews measured compliance.

The document review, coupled with the teacher interview data, supported Fixsen's assertion that the phases of implementation are often nonlinear. It appears that in the school system, not only were the phases nonlinear, but they were also overlapping and periodically there was a return to exploration and installation in an effort to improve the program. The school system did revisit decisions and rethink original choices, and, over time, the program improved. The teacher who acknowledged "we simply know more now" summed up the process and the learning that was occurring. Fixsen said essentially the same thing with his comment: "Get started and then get better" (Duda et al., 2012, p. 21).

Fixsen asserted that implementation takes 2-4 years depending on the size and scope of the program or innovation. As the school system was midway through Year 4 at the time of this study, the evidence suggested that the Head Start program was moving between initial implementation and full implementation depending on the lens through

which it is viewed. The school system seemed to characterize itself, based upon the reapplication documents and the teachers' viewpoint, as remaining in the initial implementation phase, which is often characterized as a time where tremendous change is occurring. According to Macallair and Males in 2004, as cited on the NIRN website, this initial implementation time can be frightening, filled with struggles and doubt, and the program perpetually tested. It can also be a time when new practices fail to be implemented (Macallair & Males, as cited in NIRN, n.d.). Based on the teacher interview data, the system was in the initial implementation phase; however, HHS appeared to view the program as in full implementation. Regardless, the evidence suggested that the program was strong and sustainable and would be fully implemented. In large part, the strength of the program was reflected in the strength of the drivers.

The Influence of Drivers on Implementation

Fixsen identified three important categories of drivers that are critical to the implementation process:

1. Organization drivers are mechanisms to establish and maintain welcoming organization, processes, procedures, and routines for the innovation.
2. Competency drivers enable an organization or team to cultivate, progress, and support the capability to execute an intervention as intended to benefit those it is projected to serve.
3. Leadership drivers focus on providing the best guidance approaches for the types of leadership challenges. These challenges with direction often present as part of the administration process needed to make sound decisions, offer direction, and support structural purposes (NIRN, 2013).

I looked for evidence of the presence of a specific driver and its impact within each document review and within the teacher interview questions. I also searched for the drivers within each phase of implementation. In the following section, I provide some of the key themes emerging from this analysis.

Organization Drivers: Organization Developed With the Program

There was substantial evidence of organizational drivers in the grant application, including purposeful plans that were reasonable for transportation, food services, staffing, and instructional structure. These were sensible plans, but they were typical school system processes and procedures.

Examination of Fixsen's organization driver checklists in *Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices* (NIRN, 2013) revealed support for the school system's administrative structures and procedures with an executive-level leadership team, a program coordinator, and planned collaboration with the elementary school principals regarding where Head Start would be located. Processes were identified, but, in reality, the processes the school system thought they would be able to use were not acceptable to Health and Human Services. The teacher's lamenting taking attendance in two ways on a daily basis to satisfy both requirements illustrated the lack of proficiency in this area.

Fixsen noted about the organizational drivers that "policies and procedures are developed and revised to support the new ways of work" (NIRN, 2013, p. 39), but this did not happen right away for the school system's Head Start program. As the program moved through the phases, from exploration to installation to initial implementation, there was consistent evidence in documents and in teacher responses that processes, procedures, and protocols were designed, revised, revisited, and restructured through the

phases. Organization developed as the program developed. Review of the grant reapplications and teacher interview responses supported this assertion in that every year, there were changes in time, structures, and scheduling.

Competency Drivers: Competency Increased With Experience

The Head Start staff was credentialed and experienced, and despite a very rapid turnaround time to interview and hire staff, skilled teachers and support staff were in place according to plan. The achievement data and CLASS scores provided evidence of the aptitude of the instructional staff to foster student achievement.

Although the staff was certified, there was not ample time for training prior to initial implementation in many areas. The curriculum materials were newly selected, and the staff struggled with student behaviors. With regard to training, there was not a timely preparation protocol that occurred before the teachers were required to use or implement new programs or materials. For example, one of the teachers specifically recommended that training for dealing with challenging student behaviors needed to occur before the school year began.

Fixsen addressed the need for content experts to support and coach staff in his competency driver checklists. Initially, such content experts were not in place; only classroom teachers were included in the original staffing plan. The addition of instructional specialists, who held general education and special education certification, in Years 2 and 3 was evidence that the school system saw a need and adjusted the staffing accordingly. The planned addition of a third instructional specialist for Year 5 affirmed this decision to anchor an instructional specialist at each Head Start site. Based upon teacher responses, it was apparent that the instructional specialists supported classroom

teachers in building their skill set instructionally and with managing challenging behaviors. Fixsen also noted a data collection and analysis process on the competency checklist. There was no mention of an ongoing data review process in the grant application, although achievement data from the school system were included in the package that supported the need to increase early childhood services because of a substantial achievement gap between students living in poverty and other children. In describing how the program progressed through the various implementation phases, teachers mentioned data review, instructional adjustments, and the importance of assessment in their responses to interview questions. It appears that competency, as did organization, grew with the experience of the Head Start leadership team and instructional practitioners.

From the fall of 2013 to the time of this study, the teachers characterized their experiences as challenging and sometimes frustrating. Although they reported numerous problems, they also acknowledged that each year, those problems were refined or resolved. The teachers' responses to the interview questions mirrored Fixsen's description of initial implementation as a time when stakeholders learn from their mistakes; manage the discomfort of new practices; cope with change; provide training and guidance; refine school responsibilities, tasks, and routines; and make wide-ranging revisions. The challenges of initial implementation were defined by Fixsen as a time when "all of the components of the program or innovation are in place and the implementation supports begin to function" (Duda et al., 2012, p. 21).

Leadership Drivers: Adaptive Leadership and the Instructional Specialists

There was evidence of planned leadership in the grant application, which denoted a school system governance structure that included a four-person leadership team consisting of executive directors, fiscal specialists, the program coordinator, and representatives from special education. The leadership team was directly involved in interviewing potential staff. Although not initially involved, members of the leadership team became actively engaged in professional development when initial implementation was underway. Fixsen identified a leadership team as essential for program leadership.

Fixsen's leadership checklists noted the need for leadership to directly seek the insights and perspective of the practitioners. This practice was not noted in the grant application or directly stated in the reapplications; however, it was very apparent in the teacher interviews. The teachers overwhelmingly responded that they were routinely asked for feedback about challenges and obstacles and how problems could be solved. Specific references were made to the changes in collaborative planning and to the instructional specialists' role in driving instruction, modifying processes, and responding to data with modified plans. Professional development became embedded in monthly planning sessions during which intense scrutiny of curriculum materials and standards drove the planning process for the upcoming instructional theme. Although this professional development had been an asset to the program, it was apparent that more training to assist the staff in dealing with challenging students was needed.

Fixsen cited various types of leadership, such as technical leadership and adaptive leadership, which changed with the program's needs. Technical leaders provide guidance and help to minimize barriers and obstacles as the innovation moves forward (NIRN,

2013). The reapplication documents detailed changes in structure and processes that would improve efficiency and effectiveness; these were the results of the technical leadership's working with school system departments to find a better and more streamlined way of doing business. Such improvement often occurred in the installation and initial implementation phases when big ideas were put into practice. The meal service adjustments to meet the Head Start requirement of family-style meals in lieu of traditional cafeteria-style dining served as an example of the leadership team's advocacy to find a way to meet requirements and to work with existing departments to do so.

Adaptive leadership is how Fixsen characterized the need for leadership to change over time to meet the needs of the program (NIRN, 2013). The instructional specialists assumed more and more of a leadership role because they were on site, had the confidence of the teaching staff, and possessed the curriculum knowledge to support the teachers in solving problems. One teacher referred to her instructional specialist as a great "liaison"; another teacher firmly stated that it was the specialist who helped her solve problems and gave her permission to make needed changes.

There were obvious deficits with some of the organizational and leadership drivers from the teachers' perspective; however, it appeared that the teachers' proficiency and expertise, particularly with the instructional specialists, compensated for those deficit areas. This scenario represented adaptive leadership. Although challenges continued with issues of isolation, communication, and competing regulations, there was positive momentum to solve the problems and to address the concerns. The technical leadership was fostering better understanding and improved communication.

The success of any new program or innovation is in its ability to be scaled up and sustained. After 4 years, the school system's Head Start was moving through the phases, revisiting some phases when necessary, and continuing to improve and strengthen each year. Health and Human Services had recently informed the school system that at the end of the next school year, as the original 5-year grant period concluded, they would not need to compete for another 5-year grant but would automatically be awarded \$11 million dollars for a new grant through 2023. This school system's Head Start program was deemed sustainable.

Conclusions

I drew several important conclusions from this case study. There is a critical need for a substantial and thorough planning period as the implementation process begins. Substantial time for study is essential for a thoughtful implementation process. This exploration or planning time is ultimately the key to the success or failure of the implementation. The school system in this case was delayed notice of the grant award, which severely shortchanged the planning phase that set the stage for the next 4 years.

It was also apparent that the competence of the school system staff, although struggling, compensated for the lack of sufficient planning time. The collective skill and expertise of the school system's various departments as well as the experience and commitment of the instructional staff enabled the school system to move forward and to solve problems as they arose. Although the school system staff had the capability to solve these problems, they were forced to do so quickly, and frustration and anxiety were a common result. Although some irritation would have inevitably occurred with the implementation of any new large-scale program, it could have been minimized with more

detail-level planning and more succinct communication at the beginning of the implementation process.

This school system's implementation of Head Start loosely followed the Fixsen model. The Fixsen model proved to be a helpful tool in examining and analyzing the school system's implementation process. There was evidence of all of the phases and drivers in the school system's implementation, but not all aspects of Fixsen's phases and drivers were considered by the school system. It is apparent that the phases occurred as the Fixsen model defined them and the drivers were in place in many circumstances. The successes the school system experienced can be attributed to the thoughtful consideration to components identified in the phases and drivers. The challenges the school system faced also can be linked directly to deficits or oversights with the drivers and to inadequate time and attention to detail throughout the various phases.

Important decisions take time. Staff involved in implementing this Head Start program did not have the time needed to carefully consider many decisions prior to installation and initial implementation. The lack of adequate time and exploration influenced the implementation process for the next 4 years and contributed to the teachers' frustration and anxiety. There was not enough time for the important messaging in the beginning, which could have fostered a better and more comprehensive understanding of how this Head Start program was different from the previous Head Start program in the county. If the communication had been targeted and more timely perhaps the community would have more clearly seen the benefit to students and the potential for a positive impact in future years for these children as they matriculated through the school system. Additional time also would have allowed the school system to do a better

job of highlighting the skill set and credentialing of the staff and the role of Head Start in the system's early childhood pathway.

Fortunately, the skill set and competence of the staff, the leadership team, and the school system's existing processes and procedures could serve as a starting point and ultimately sustained the Head Start program in the early years of the grant despite the very short planning time. These factors allowed the staff and the system to grow and learn with the program and then improve it over time. Evidence of the overlapping phases and the almost constant need to revisit and revise decisions illustrate the challenges the staff faced.

In Year 4, it appeared that the school system's Head Start program had found the needed momentum to continue, the staff had stabilized, and routines had become automatic and able to sustain the program. Fixsen's model identified 4 years as the point at which an innovation is firmly in place; that assertion appeared to be accurate for the most part with this school system's program. Fixsen's timeframe proved to be correct for this school system.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations as a result of this study. These include recommendations for school systems as they contemplate implementation of new programs. In addition, specific recommendations are included for school systems that are considering applying for a Head Start grant and implementing the program as a part of the school system.

For a school system considering an innovation or program implementation.

A school system could benefit from using an implementation framework as it pursues any

substantial innovation or seeks to implement a new program. An implementation framework provides a systematic process to guide thinking and fosters needed focus on important details that are easily overlooked. It is also recommended that an implementation framework be used from the very beginning of the process to facilitate the all-important exploration phase and to support the organization in the earliest planning stages.

In this case study, the Fixsen framework worked well as an analysis tool because it was well suited to the federal Head Start program. If a school system chooses to use Fixsen's framework, it is recommended that the active implementation worksheets be used to assist program and school system leaders in thoughtfully considering the impact of the drivers and the various phases of implementation in detail. By using the actual implementation worksheets, valuable documentation can be created to guide further planning in a methodical manner.

Another recommendation for the school or system is to be mindful of the time needed for each distinct phase of an implementation and to develop a process to ensure that phases are not shortchanged. As a school system submits a grant and while awaiting the results of their application, it would be helpful to continue the exploration and planning if the likely outcome will be a grant award. In doing so, the school system will be better positioned to move forward quickly in the event of a delay. Although this continuation of planning would be ideal, committing resources for a grant that has not yet been awarded could be problematic.

In the event of a significant federal delay with a grant award, as was the case with this Head Start program, a school system should try to negotiate a revised time frame that

is mutually acceptable and beneficial to all stakeholders to eliminate a hurried approach. Given that Health and Human Services did offer this school system the opportunity to delay their official start to the midpoint in the school year, it is reasonable to assume that the granting agency might be open to other options. Although a delay to the midyear point was not acceptable to the school system in this case, other options presented might have been open for discussion. As this study strongly suggests, exploration and installation require time, meticulous study, and careful thought to foster a successful implementation. In this case, negotiating a revised timeframe, which protected children, would have been a benefit to everyone involved.

Fixsen's framework, or other implementation models, can be used to support a variety of implementation projects. The selection of a textbook series, an intervention program, or a federal grant-funded program such as Head Start, as well as the development of a new academy or magnet program, would benefit from the use of an implementation model with an evidence-based structure. It is recommended that a school system select a model for its practicality and systematic approach to implementation. In this case study, Fixsen's best practices, had they been used, could have facilitated a more thoughtful and detailed process for the school system's implementation and, equally important, for strengthening and sustaining it over time, given the sensible and realistic expectations for implementation.

For school systems considering Head Start. Because designation renewal for Head Start programs is likely to continue as school systems deal with the impact of reductions in state and local funding, it is possible that more school systems will pursue a Head Start grant as a component of their early childhood program. This process would

provide them access to needed federal funding and allow them to potentially provide prekindergarten experiences with grant monies.

It is recommended that a school system pursuing Head Start select an evidence-based implementation model to support and guide their implementation process. It is also recommended that a school system wishing to implement Head Start seek support for their implementation from other school systems that are grantees. Moreover, this school system's experience and lessons learned may provide a direct benefit to an organization considering applying for a Head Start grant and incorporating the program into a school system. This school system would have welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with another school system as they were working through the phases of implementation.

Summary

This case study revealed a number of important factors related to the Head Start implementation. The implementation of a large-scale program with separate regulations and expectations into a school system with its own policies, regulations, and contractual obligations is a complex process. Moreover, the motivation for adopting a new program is often complicated and riddled with bureaucracy. Although the purpose of implementing the program is to improve the outcome for children, change in education is complicated, time consuming, and largely dependent on the people who are putting the innovation into practice.

In the end, this Head Start program is well on its way to full implementation after 4 years. This school system's Head Start is thriving with a skilled and stable staff, a deepening understanding within the community, high achievement as measured by CLASS, and a commitment from Health and Human Services for another 5-year grant

period without competition. The new grant award, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year and continuing through school year 2022-2023, with a guarantee of \$11 million dollars, validates the success of the school system's Head Start implementation.

Appendix A: Consent Form

Project Title	A Proposed Case Study of the Implementation of the Head Start Program Into a Public School System
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Kelly Murray Hall under the direction of Dr. Margaret J. McLaughlin at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are currently or have been a Head Start teacher in the school system's Head Start program. The purpose of this research project is to examine the implementation process through the lens of implementation science as it is unfolding in the school system. As a current or former public school Head Start teacher, you have critical insights that can help the researcher to better understand the implementation process from the practitioner's viewpoint and perspective.
Procedures	<p>The procedures involve an interview at the time and location of your choice. You will be asked a series of questions about your experience in implementing the Head Start program. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and transcribed and any field notes or memos generated will be shared with the interview subject for review. The interview is expected to take 45 to 60 minutes.</p> <p>There are 15 proposed interview questions. Following are three sample questions:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Please describe your teaching or student teaching experience if this is your first year of teaching. Specifically, do you have prior Head Start or PreK teaching experience; if so, what was the setting (public school, private preschool, church based)?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When do you plan with other teachers and with your para-educator(s)? How is that time structured?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Have you seen changes in structure, organization, or procedures from year to year? If so, do you characterize these changes as improvements? Please describe.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	These interviews involve no more than minimal risk. Interviews will be reported in the aggregate and your identity will be protected to the greatest extent possible. The questions are general in nature and similar to questions that might be discussed in a professional learning community session and would not likely be perceived as unusual or intrusive. If a question makes you uncomfortable, however, that question will be excluded. There will be no repercussions for participating or not participating in the interview.

Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits for your participation; however, your insights may facilitate positive programmatic or structural changes to the Head Start program. In the future, other educators might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the implementation process as more school systems are being encouraged to pursue the Head Start grant.
Confidentiality	<p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by ensuring interviews will be reported in the aggregate and no names or other identifying information will be publicly reported. Transcripts will be maintained in a password-protected computer and stored in a locked area. The principal investigator will be the sole person to have access to this information.</p> <p>If a report or article is written about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
Compensation	You will receive a \$10 gift card to Target or Amazon at the conclusion of the interview.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Kelly Murray Hall 23273 Nicholson Street, Hollywood, MD 20636 240-298-6358</p>
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678 </p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>

Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read this consent form or have had it read to you, your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	CONSENT TO VOLUNTARILY AUDIO RECORD INTERVIEW (Please check and initial)	<p>_____ (_____)</p> <p>Please check Initial</p>
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Appendix B: IRB Application

University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board IRB Initial Application - Part 1

Last edited by: Kelly Hall

Last edited on: December 28, 2016

[\[click for checklist\]](#)

☒ Full
☐ Expedited
☐ Exempt

[1004335-1] A PROPOSED CASE STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HEAD START PROGRAM INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Answer all questions on this form completely, include attachments and obtain signatures of Co-Investigators and your department IRB Liaison prior to final submission on IRBNet.

I. Principal Investigator

Name: Kelly Hall, EdD **Status:** Graduate Student
Department: EDHI- Center for Educational Policy and Leadership
Phone: 240-298-6358 **Email:** kmhall@smcps.org
Address: 23273 Nicholson Street, Hollywood, MD 20636

II. Faculty Advisor

N/A ☐

Note: A faculty advisor is required if the PI is a student resident or fellow and the Faculty Advisor MUST sign this package through IRBNet.

Name: Margaret McLaughlin
Department: EDHI- Center for Educational Policy and Leadership
Phone: 301-367-8943 **Email:** mjm@umd.ed
Address: College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

III. Co-Investigators

N/A ☒

Note: All co-investigators MUST sign this package through IRBNet.

Name:
Department:
Phone: **Email:**
Address:

IV. Funding Information

N/A ☒

Note: A copy of the awarded grant application (minus budgetary information) must be provided.

Status	Funding Type	Sponsor Name	ORAA #	COI
--------	--------------	--------------	--------	-----

Funding Title:

V. Project Information

Lay Summary:

In 2012, a public school system in Maryland applied for and received the five year grant from Health and Human Services (HHS) to take over and operate the Head Start program for the Maryland county. The staff charged with executing the Head Start grant has faced many of the challenges documented in previous literature. Through this study, I propose to examine the implementation process, through the lens of implementation science, as it is unfolding in this school system.

Requested Review Path:

- ☒ Full
- ☐ Expedited
- ☐ Exempt

Projected Completion Date: 04/03/2017

Research Category:

- ☐ Faculty or Staff Research
- ☒ Graduate Student Research
- ☐ Student/Faculty Collaboration
- ☐ Undergraduate Student Research
- ☐ Other:

Academic Committee Review:

- ☐ Yes - Masters committee
- ☒ Yes - Dissertation committee
- ☐ No additional academic review required

Participant Incentives:

- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Check
- ☐ Raffle/ Lottery:
- ☐ Extra Credit/ Course Credit:

☒ Gift:

I plan to offer the teachers who consent to the interview a nominal gift card to Target or Amazon.
The gift cards will not exceed \$10.00.

☐ Food:

☐ Other:

☐ Not Applicable

VI. Performance Sites

Performance Sites Engaged in Human Subject Research:

(where the research will be conducted)

☐ UMCP - Campus:

☐ University of Maryland - Extension:

☐ Campus Health Center

☐ Universities at Shady Grove:

☒ Schools: St. Mary's County Public Schools-Green Holly Elementary, Greenview Knolls Elementary, Benjamin Banneker Elementary, Mechanicsville Elementary

☐ Prison/Jail:

☒ Other:

Interview subjects may opt to meet away from their classrooms at a mutually agreed upon site such as the public libraries located in Lexington Park, Leonardtown, and Charlotte Hall, Maryland.

Is this an international study?

☐ Yes [complete Section 10 of Initial Application Part 2]

☒ No

If yes: **International Sites:**

VII. Subject Information

Targeted Populations:

☒ Normal adult/healthy persons

☐ Cognitively impaired persons

☐ Economically disadvantaged persons

☐ Educationally disadvantaged persons

☐ Elderly/aged persons

☐ Hospital patients or outpatients

- ☐ Illiterate persons
- ☐ Individuals with physical disabilities
- ☐ Minority group(s)
- ☐ Minors/children
[inclusion of anyone under 18 requires a Parental Consent Form]
- ☐ Non-English speakers
- ☐ Pregnant women
- ☐ Prisoners
- ☐ Students (non-minors)
- ☐ UMCP employees
- ☐ Other special characteristics and special populations:

Informed Consent Process:

- ☒ Informed consent will be obtained from subjects and documented with a signed, written consent form
- ☐ Informed consent will be obtained from subjects, but no signed consent form will be used. This includes oral consent and implied consent (e.g., completing a survey).
[please see the Requesting a Waiver of Informed Consent Guidance]
- ☐ Fully informed consent will not be obtained from all subjects. This includes deception, withholding information, etc.
[please see the Requesting a Waiver of Informed Consent Guidance]

Will health information be collected?

(See the [HIPAA section of the IRB website](#) for more information and additional resources.)

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes, data are de-identified or constitute a limited data set.
- ☐ Yes, subject's authorization will be obtained or a waiver or alteration of authorization will be requested.
[complete IRB Form HIPAA]

VIII. Research Procedures

Research Procedures:

- ☒ Records review - retrospective
- ☐ Records review - prospective
- ☐ Education research
- ☐ Behavioral experiments
- ☐ Behavioral observation
- ☐ Questionnaires/surveys
- ☒ Interviews
- ☒ Audiotaping/videotaping
- ☐ The Internet

- ☐ Deception
[describe debriefing process in Section 7 of Initial Application Part 2]
- ☐ Cancer Interventions (health promotion, implementation, etc.)
- ☐ None of the above

Biomedical Procedures:

- ☐ Tissue banking
- ☐ Biopsy
- ☐ Blood draw:
- ☐ Use of pre-existing tissues
- ☐ Clinical tests
- ☐ Radiology
- ☐ Radiation/X-ray/DEXA
- ☐ fMRI
[use IRB fMRI templates]
- ☐ Pregnancy screening
- ☐ EKG
- ☐ EEG
- ☐ Genetic analysis
- ☒ None of the above

IX. Assurances and Signatures

Assurances

This research, once approved, is subject to continuing review and approval by the IRB. The principal investigator will maintain records of this research according to IRB guidelines. If these conditions are not met, approval of this research could be suspended or terminated.

Electronic signatures certify that:

- The signatory agrees that he or she is aware of the policies on research involving participants of the University of Maryland College Park and will safeguard the rights, dignity, and privacy of all participants.
- The information provided in this application form is correct.
- The principal investigator will seek and obtain prior written approval from the IRB for any substantive modification in the proposal, including but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators/agencies as well as changes in procedures.
- Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported to the IRB.
- The research will not be initiated and subjects cannot be recruited until final written approval is granted.

The following signatures are required for new project submissions:

- Principal Investigator *Kelly Murray Hall*
- Research Advisor(s)

- IRB Liaison ([click here for list](#))

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESEARCHERS

[\[top\]](#)

Now that you have completed this document, check your work, attach all appropriate documents, electronically sign and submit your work. Based on your responses, the following additional documentation must be included with this package before submission. Upload additional documentation in the Designer.

Documents available in the IRBNet Forms and Templates Library:

- Consent Form (template and Completion Guide in Library)

Additional required documentation:

No additional documents are required for this project.

If you have any questions, please refer to the guidelines in the IRBNet Forms and Templates Library or contact irb@umd.edu.

Appendix C: UMD Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

2125 Lee Building
College Park, Maryland 20742-5121
301.405.0376 Tel. 301.314.9305 Fax
<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu>

Ms. Kelly M. Hall
23273 Nicholson Street
Hollywood, MD 20636

February 7, 2017
University ID: 107-65-5561

Dear Ms. Hall:

Congratulations on having arrived at the final stage of your doctoral training. As you prepare for the defense of your doctoral dissertation, you should be aware of the procedures that are involved in this important event.

Professor Donna Wiseman has agreed to serve as my representative on your Dissertation Examining Committee. The responsibilities of the Dean's Representative are to ensure that the procedures of the oral defense are in compliance with those of the Graduate School, as described in the *Established Procedures of the Doctoral Dissertation Defense* and approved and revised by the Graduate Council on April 4, 2000 and to report to me any unusual problems experienced in the conduct of the defense. You should feel free to consult with my representative if you feel that any aspect of the dissertation defense was unfair or not consistent with the procedural guidelines.

The following is a summary of the highlights of the procedural guidelines for a proper oral defense. A copy of the full guidelines may be found in the *Degree Completion, Examination, and Graduation Manual* available at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu>

Committee preparation. The members of the Dissertation Examining Committee must receive the complete dissertation at least ten working days before the scheduled Examination. Should the Dissertation Examining Committee deem it reasonable and appropriate, it may require submission of the dissertation more than ten working days in advance of the Examination.

Location of the defense. Oral defenses must be held in University facilities that are readily accessible to all members of the dissertation examining committee and others attending the defense. The chair of the dissertation examining committee selects the time and place for the examination.

Notice. Announcements of the date, time, and location of the defense, as well as the candidate's name and the dissertation title shall be disseminated to all faculty and graduate students within the department or graduate program in which the candidate's degree is to be awarded at least five working days prior to the defense. Mass-distribution methods such as email, a faculty/student newsletter, or individual announcements are acceptable. Merely posting a paper notice on a corridor bulletin board will not constitute a sufficient announcement.

Attendance at the defense. Oral defenses must be attended by all members of the student's officially established Dissertation Examining Committee as approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. They are to be physically present in the examination room during the entire examination. Should a last minute change in the constitution of the Dissertation Examining Committee be required, the change must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the director of graduate studies of the student's graduate program and the chair of the student's Dissertation Examining Committee. The defense must be open to all members of the College Park Graduate Faculty.

Identification of the Dean's Representative. The Dean's Representative must be identified at the beginning of the defense.

Emergency substitution procedure. The Graduate School is aware that last-minute emergencies can prevent a committee member from attending a scheduled dissertation examination. We are prepared to work with the dissertation supervisor and/or graduate director to make last-minute substitutions in committee membership to allow the defense to take place as scheduled. Please follow these steps to assure a smooth substitution.

- a. The request must be sent in writing. E-mail requests to gradschool@umd.edu are acceptable. A telephone call (301-405-3644) to the Graduate School explaining that an emergency request is coming will facilitate the process.
- b. The proposed substitute must be a member of the Graduate Faculty consistent with the rules for committee membership. Thus, if the Dean's Representative (who must be a tenured faculty member) could not attend, the substitution of an untenured member of the Graduate Faculty would not be acceptable.
- c. Once the written request has been received, the substitution will be made, usually within the hour, provided that the revised committee meets the requirements for committee membership.
- d. When the substitution has been made, a written confirmation, in the same format as the request was received (fax or e-mail) will be sent out, along with a telephone confirmation. **The substitution is not official, however, until the written confirmation has been received in the department or program.**
- e. **A defense that is held with one or more substitute members on the committee, but without prior written confirmation from the Graduate School that the substitution(s) have been approved, will be voided and the defense will have to be repeated.**
- f. Place a copy of the written request and the written confirmation in the student's file for future reference, if needed.

Invalidation of the defense. The Dean of the Graduate School may void any defense not carried out in accordance with the procedures and policies of the Graduate School. In addition, upon recommendation of the Dean's Representative, the Dean may rule an oral defense to be null and void.

Student presentation. The dissertation defense shall consist of two parts. Part 1 shall be a public presentation by the candidate on the main aspects of the research reported in the dissertation. During Part 1, questions from the audience to the candidate will be permitted. For questions from persons who are not members of the Dissertation Examination Committee, the Chair of the Dissertation Examination Committee shall have discretion to decide whether such questions are germane to the topic of the dissertation and how much time shall be allotted for the answers. Part 2 shall be a formal examination by the Dissertation Examination Committee. This part shall be open only to Dissertation Examination Committee, other members of the Graduate Faculty, and graduate students from the candidate's department/graduate program. During Part 2, only members of the Dissertation Examination Committee shall be permitted to ask questions. Departments/programs may vote to establish a policy to have Part 2 open only to members of the Dissertation Examination committee and other members of the Graduate Faculty.

Questioning. The chair invites questions in turn from each member of the Dissertation Examining Committee. The questioning may continue as long as the Dissertation Examining Committee feels that it is necessary and reasonable for the proper examination of the student. The student must have ample opportunity to answer the questions of the Committee.

Conclusion of the defense. After questioning has been completed, the student and any others who are not members of the Dissertation Examining Committee are asked to leave the room and the Dissertation Examining Committee discusses whether or not the dissertation (including its defense) has been satisfactory. The Committee has the following alternatives:

- a. To accept the dissertation without any recommended changes and sign the Report of the Examining Committee.
- b. To accept the dissertation with recommendations for changes, and, except for the chair, sign the Report of the Examining Committee. The chair will check the dissertation and, upon his/her approval, sign the Report of the Examining Committee.
- c. To recommend revisions to the dissertation and not sign the Report of the Examining Committee until the student has made the recommended changes and resubmitted the dissertation for the Dissertation Examining Committee's approval. The Dissertation Examining Committee members sign the Report of the Examining Committee if they approve the revised dissertation.

- d. To recommend revisions and convene a second meeting of the Dissertation Examining Committee to review the dissertation and complete the student's defense.
- e. To rule the dissertation (including its defense) unsatisfactory. In that circumstance, the student fails.

Following the defense, the chair, in the presence of the Dean's Representative, must inform the student of the outcome of the defense. The chair and the Dean's Representative both sign the Oral Defense Report indicating which of the above alternatives has been adopted. A copy of this report is to be included in the student's file at the graduate program office, and a copy is to be given to the student.

Passage or failure. The student passes if one member of the Dissertation Examining Committee refuses to sign the Report of the Examining Committee, but the other members of the Committee agree to sign, before or after the approval of the recommended changes. Two or more negative votes constitute a failure of the candidate to meet the dissertation requirement. In cases of failure, the Dissertation Examining Committee must specify in detail and in writing the nature of the deficiencies in the dissertation and/or the oral performance that led to failure. This statement is to be submitted to the program's director of graduate studies, the Dean of the Graduate School and the student. A second defense may be permitted if the student will be in good standing at the time of the proposed second defense. A second defense requires the approval of the program's director of graduate studies and the Dean of the Graduate School. If the student fails this second defense, or if a second defense is not permitted, the student's admission to the graduate program is terminated.

Once again, congratulations on having arrived at this important milestone in your education. Please accept my best wishes for a successful defense and for swift, unhindered progress along your professional path.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Franke
Interim Dean, The Graduate School

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